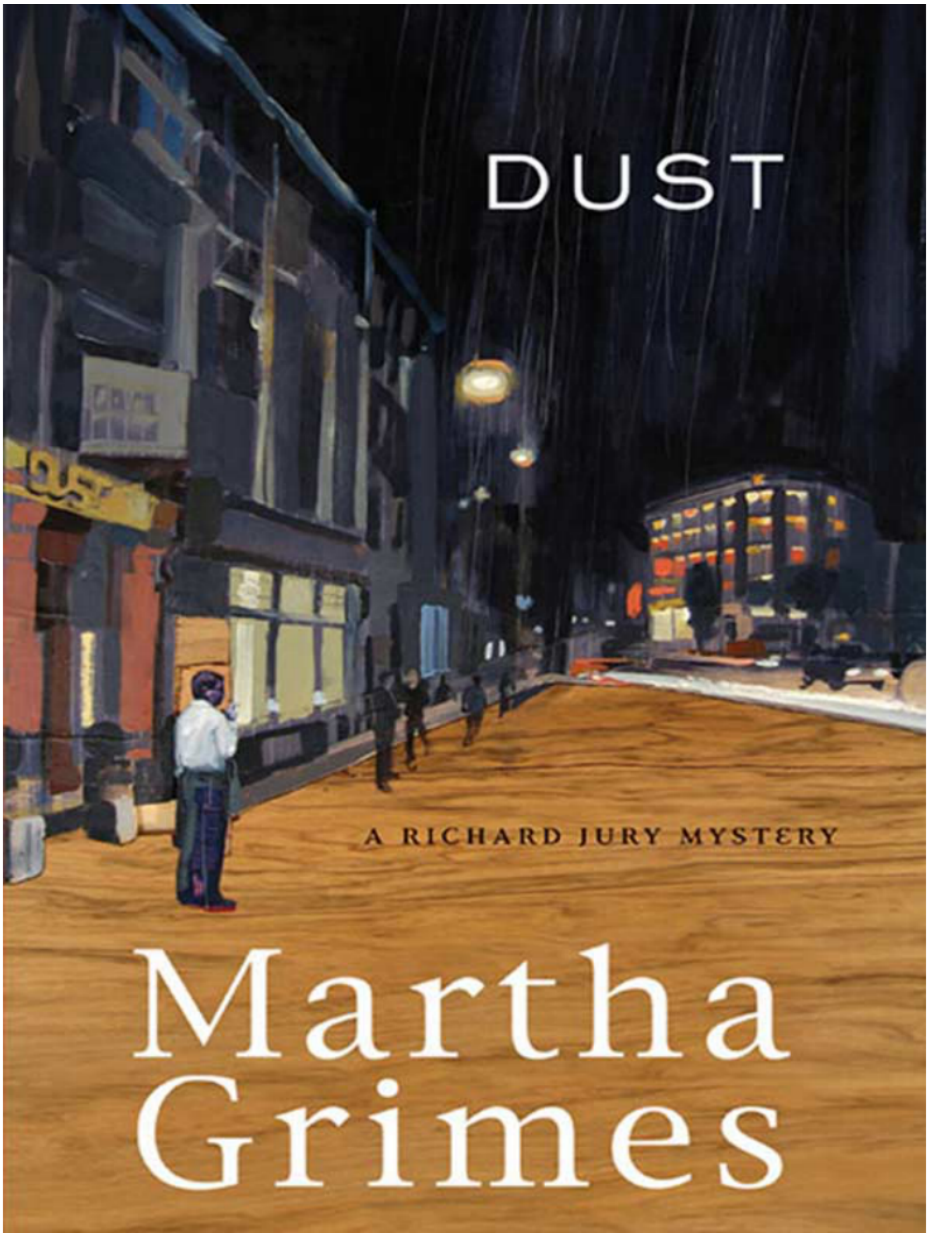
DUST
A RICHARD JURY MYSTERY
Martha Grimes

DUST

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DUST

A Richard Jury Mystery

Viking

VIKING
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To the memory of
my father, my mother, and my brother

This is just love. Itâs nothing like the storm.

Clive James, âAfter the Stormâ

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The Figure in the Carpet

One

Benny Keegan whistled his way down the hall of the Zetterâs fifth floor, his small dog Sparky obediently at his heels. Benny hoisted the tray on one hand, as heâd watched Gilbert do. The French press slid a few inches and the cups rattled a bit, so he lowered it and held it with both hands. He needed practice.

Not that the hotel would ever hire him as a waiter; theyâd said a sixteen-year-old would need a lot of âseasoningâ to acquire that job. The ones who had interviewed him laughed at the word âseasoningââ*food, get it?* Benny got it and in his head went one better. He was only thirteen: *I lied, get it?*

Thirteen, but what he lacked in height and experience he made up for in depthâin his glance, his sober expression, his seeming seriousness, and his experience of the world.

And theyâd gone on: âAs youâll be in the kitchen, mostly on the washing up, and the late shift tooâ¦â

Now here he was, with his unhired dog, pinch-hitting for old Gilbert Snow, bringing coffee on a tray.

He knocked at the door. No reply. Knocked again. What was the drill? Old Gilbert hadnât gone into the finer points, given the guest had ordered coffee separately from his dinner; given that, this guest should be here. He knocked again. He had Gilbertâs key card. (âKeep that safe now, young Benny. No one needs to know; Iâll only be gone for a bit. Got to get meself topped up.â His laugh was phlegmy as he pulled on his coat.)

But the door had given in to the last knock, had opened a quarter inch, and now Benny pushed it delicately, again announced himself. âRoom service.â No one answered. He hoped he hadnât got the wrong room. He and Sparky were all the way into the dimly lit space and looking around. Right or wrong, it was poshâreally modern, or

modish. Not three-hundred-quid-a-night posh, but he wouldnât mind stopping here for a nightâsheets on the bed white as glare ice, towels you could pitch a tent with, wood polished to gleaming. Very nice.

A long ledge against the left wall that could be used as a desk or a table held the dinner service that Gilbert had delivered an hour or so ago. Heavy cutlery, good china. Remains of a hamburger, chipped potatoes, little pots of mustard and ketchup and pickle, their contents slathered around on chips and a half-eaten burger. Where was this person? Maybe gone down to the entrance to speak to the desk clerk or something. Not to the restaurant, hardly, if heâd gotten room service. The sliding door was open to the balconyâpatios the hotel called themâand Sparky had gone out there to nose about. All the rooftop studios had them, and this one was really big. He might be out there, enjoying the April night.

Sparky started up barking, so Benny, still with his tray, stepped out onto the patio. There were a couple of metal chairs out here, and a table. Plants, big ones in big pots. That was when he saw him with Sparky sitting beside. The man was lying face up or face skewed in an uncomfortable position near the table.

Benny held fast to the tray, the French press shivering, the little cups clicking. The tray felt glued to his hands. He took some deep breaths, trying to start his thinking going again. He kept on clutching the tray and staring down at what he could see of the manâs face. Yung, kind of. Probably a nob; that was a really good jacket he was wearing. But it wasnât so good now, not with that wide blood stain across it.

He finally managed to set down the tray. He pushed the dog aside and bent down to get a better look, only to see more heâd have to turn the body over and police didnât like that, he knew. He had to call the hotel manager or someone, but not yet. After all the agro heâd gotten down in the kitchen, he wanted to be in charge for once, just a few minutes to be in charge of the situation.

He looked at the man, thought him young. He was certain he was dead; heâd seen dead and it looked altogether different than a coma or passed out. (Heâd seen plenty of passed-outs under Waterloo Bridge.) Dead was a look of departure, of left, of the last good-bye, of gone. Still, he should check the signsâvital signs they called it. Like an artery in the neck? That was the best place. He knelt down and put his fingers on the spot where the neck met the shoulder. Nothing, no little throb or anything.

He heard his own heart hammering away.

The man was dead, no question. Benny stood and looked carefully around the patio for a sign of something, not sure what. But thatâs what detectives did. They looked.

Your eyes might alight on something amiss or out of place like that. Hands on his hips, Benny slowly rotated his head, looking carefully around. But the balcony was swept absolutely clean.

Benny whistled for Sparky to follow and went back into the room. He noticed again that the nobâs supper was half eaten. Did that mean the shooter had interrupted him in the eating of it? Or had he not been all that hungry? Burger, potatoes with a couple lines of ketchup over them, house salad. So what this bloke had told Gilbert when heâd brought the dinner was he wanted coffee later for two.

Two. Well there you have it, plain as the nose on your face: man hears a knock, goes to the door, says hi, and his mate comes in. Maybe the dead bloke sits down to finish his meal andâBenny raised his hands, left gripping right and fired his imaginary pistol. *Pow!*

Sparky had his nose tucked in a corner by the telly. Benny bet he could pick up stuff your police K-9s left behind in the dust. He was smart.

Taking care, using the white napkin from the tray as a glove, he went through the manâs pocketsâknowing he wasnât supposed to touch anything, but bloody hell, he wanted to find some identification. There was a wallet in the hip pocket, which he drew out and opened carefully. There he was.

Benny took out his own tiny address book. It had once belonged to a big soft doll in the Moonraker bookshop, where he worked afternoons. The doll was called Traveling Girl and was all tricked out in coat and hat, and with a suitcase and this address book. When the owner said she might as well give the doll to Oxfam, as obviously nobody wanted it, Benny had asked for the address book. He didnât want the doll. Well, actually, he wouldnâtâve minded having it, but how would he look, a big lad such as he, carting a doll with a suitcase around?

He had listed two numbers in the address book. (He knew them by heart, but he still liked referring to his address book.) One was the Moonraker. He found the other one and went to the phone and dialed.

Â

Richard Jury was sitting mostly dressed in his Islington flat in a very

contented mood, listening to the shower in his bathroom spilling down over arguably the most beautiful shoulders in the Greater London area.

At the same time he hoped that the feet clattering down the stairs from the third-floor flat were not aimed at his door.

Do not stop here, Carole-anne. Do not knock. Do not come in and ask, âIf youâre on the sofa, whoâs in the shower?â Unlike the majority of prayers sent up, this one was answered. The noisy clodhoppers continued on to the front door, which opened and closedâ¦.

(Thank you, Godâ¦) â¦then thought better of it and started back.

(â¦for nothing. Yes, thanks for setting me up and then *pow!* Right in the kisser.)

Tap tap tap, heels on the floor.

Rap rap rap, hand on door.

Jury cupped his hands around his mouth: âIâm taking a shower! Come back later!â

Silence, then the feet moving off. Jury settled back into his former state of dazed contentment and picked up his tea.

Front door again. Different steps. Softer, slipperlike: *flap flap flap.* They stopped at his door.

This would be the tenant in the basement flat who rarely came to his door. Mrs. Wasserman. There was a gentle rapping of old knuckles.

This time Jury got up hurriedly and made tracks back to his kitchen to give his voice more distance to travel. âIâm in the bathroom!â In the bathroom, the water drummed down.

Muffled words came from the hallway. He crept back to the sofa and heard the slipper tread move away, the buildingâs front door open and close.

He sighed heavily and picked up his mug of tea.

A scrabbling sound on the stairs alerted him. The scrabble stopped at his door. Then silence. Then a brief thumping.

My God! Had he no private life? Was he the poster boy for Interruptions, Inc.? Was he the standard-bearer for âYou-Have-No-Secrets-from-Us, Ltd.?â Was his personal hell going to be a hallway down which an eternity of footsteps come and go belonging to people he could not see?

Oh, the bloody hell with it! He got up and flung open his door. âCome in, come in, never mind your coming is unbelievably poorly timed! Thatâs my girl in the shower, smartening herself up. When she

comes out you can ask her lots of questions about who she is and what sheâs doing here in my shower. Our love lifeâs an open book. Come in. Come in. Can I get you something? Beans on toast? A quart of gin?â Jury stood aside and swept his arm from door sill to living room in a welcoming way. The dog walked in.

The dog plopped itself down and yawned.

âWhat? Bored already? Oh, Iâm sorry we didnât bring a doggy bag from the restaurant with that leftover caviar. Would you like me to rustle up a crÃ¨me brÃ»lÃ©e? Cadbury bar? Bone?â

Jury reached under a foot rest and pulled out a heavily chewed raw-hide number and slid it over to the dog.

âWhoâre you talking to?â

Jury hadnât realized the shower had stopped until he heard her voice.

âStone. The dog from upstairs.â

Phyllisâs wet head popped out of the door. He could see the top line of a towel wrapped around her chest. She ducked back in. âIâll be out in a minute.â

âTake your time. Weâve got all of Islington coming through.â But he said it to himself, for the bathroom door had closed.

So he talked to Stone for a while. Nothing earthshaking, just pleasantries, as they both settled comfortably back.

The phone rang. Of course! It was only half past ten; what was keeping people?

It was Benny Keegan on the other end.

Jury was astonished. âBenny! How are you? Where are you? Whatâs going on?â It was understood Benny could call him anytime, day or night. The boy never had before this.

âIâm at the Zetter; itâs this posh place in Clerkânwell. Clerkânwell Road itâs on. See, I got me this job here where I help in the kitchen some nights.â Benny lowered his voice. âTonight theyâre low on staff, on room service, and they asked me to take up a tray to this guest.â

Jury smiled. The last time he had checked, Benny Keegan was thirteen. The hotel must have rescinded the child labor laws. But this was hardly the time to bring up age. âGo on.â

âI take this what you call a French pressâtoo many nobs in this place for my tastesâon me tray up to the fifâ floor. I knock and the door kind of opens. Still I knock and keep knocking but nobody comes. So I goes in and nobodyâs in the room and I goes out to the balcony. See, rooms on this floor all have them. Then I see him. Heâs

dead, inât he?â That last part was more or less squeaked out.

Jury sat forward suddenly. âBenny, are you okay?â

âMe? Iâm okay, Mr. Jury. But I canât say the same for this fella in Room 523. Thatâs where I am right now.â

âYou havenât called anyone?â

Benny sighed. âYeah, I have. You, Mr. Jury. You tolâ me if there was ever any troubleââ

âYouâre absolutely right. Iâm glad you did. Nowââ

Benny lowered his voice as if the dead were all ears. âNow, hereâs the thing. I told âem, the guy that hired me, I was sixteen. Small for my age, see. But I guess the hotel dinât much care as long as I was just hauling trash. But me findinâ dead people, well, itâd probably tell against me, you know, beinâ under the legal age.â

âGive me the address, Benny.â

âItâs in EC 1. 86â88 Clerkânwell Road.â

Jury wrote it down, tore off the sheet of paper, said, âLook. Right now, youâll have to notify the hotel. Why donât you tell the cook, whoever sent you up there, what you found. Let him be the one to tell management and let them be the ones to call in police. Itâd probably be Islington police there. It would leave you right out of it. Temporarily.â Very temporarily. âSo do that, will you?â

âSure. If you say so. Blokeâs nameâs Maples. Says here on his license.â

âWhat?â

âThe dead guy. His nameâs Billy Maples.â

Jury stuck the pen back in his pocket. âBenny, you shouldnât touch anything.â

An exasperated sigh came from the other end of the phone. âAâ course, I know that. I got at the wallet with a napkin for a glove. I could lift it outta this punterâs pocket.â

âGet the management up there, Benny.â

âBut me, Iâm first on the scene, Mr. Jury. Theyâll be askinâ me all kindsa questions.â

âNot to worry. Iâll be there inside of twenty minutes.â

âWhat about a doctor, then?â

âIâm bringing one. Stay put.â He hung up.

Jury rapped on the bathroom door. âPhyllis?â He smiled. Even the air in the bathroom would be mistily covering her shoulders.

The door opened an inch and then another. She was still wrapped in the big towel.

âDr. Nancy. Weâre needed.â

Phyllis Nancy said, âIs this going to be another episode of *The Avengers*? Do I wear my Emma Peel wet suit? Or the backless black?â

The âbackless blackâ was the silk confection she had worn that very night when theyâd gone to dinner in the West End. The dress completely covered her front, but left her naked in back from her neck to her waist.

Jury had commented on the physics of the dress.

âIt isnât,â Phyllis had said, while peeling the dress downward, âexactly the uniform of a Scotland Yard pathologist.â

The black dress slid to the floor.

Now, as she opened the door wider, he hitched his fingers in the towel where it was folded over to tie. This too he watched fall.

âGet dressed. Billy Maples needs us.â

âWhoâs Billy Maples?â

Jury started to slide his arms around her, thought of Benny alone with a corpse, and resisted. âOur next case.â

Two

The Zetter, advertising itself as a ârestaurant with rooms,â stood in the Clerkenwell Road. It had the spare, angular lines of an old warehouse, the spareness become sleekness and the angularity become minimalist. These things could be accounted for when simply renamed.

Jury wondered if the Zetter bespoke a trend. Probably, given the upswing of high-end restaurants in London over the last years. Unthinkable, twenty years ago, that London would have a kitchen, or a hotel, naming its restaurant as its primary attraction.

They couldnât park in Clerkenwell Road, which even at this hour saw heavy traffic, so Jury pulled into a slot at St. Jamesâs Green.

Phyllis had no coat, but claimed her black cashmere shawl could protect her from intemperate weather: hurricanes, cyclones, tidal waves. For a while now, rain had been falling hard and steadily, so they crossed the road at a run, and came upon an alleylike walkway called Jerusalem Passage. They took the cover gratefully.

Coming from the other end was a figure in dark clothes, perhaps running from the rain, but continuing to run through the passage, head down, bumping into Phyllis.

âHey!â said Jury.

Over his shoulder, the man threw back an apology. Jury would have stopped him then and there had it not been for the dark clothes, the white collar that advertised his vocation. Running from an angry God? wondered Jury. Phyllis laughed and they went on.

As they stood at the hotelâs front desk, Jury saw that the death had had precious little effect on the restaurant, which, even at nearly eleven oâclock, appeared to be doing brisk business.

He produced his ID for the good-looking desk clerk, who, in a true, new voguish-hotel-with-murder calm, plucked up a house phone,

spoke quietly, and then said, âYouâre to go right up. Itâs on the fifth floor, 523.â She smiled and nodded at Jury and gave Phyllis, in her brief black dress, a questioning look before Phyllis produced her own ID.

They walked into a room where the forensic team was already in the process of capturing whatever evidence it could. A youngish woman, a maid, perhaps, was being questioned by whoever was in charge. Her English was poor and she was having a hard time of it. Jury thought the detectiveâs back looked familiar. Then he turned.

âRon Chilten!â said Jury.

Ron smiled his sphinxlike smile, hinting at a richness of disclosure that Jury knew was never coming, largely because there wasnât anything to disclose. It was Chiltenâs forte. âRichard, for Godâs sake.â He simulated deep puzzlement. âI stand here and search my brain and canât remember sending up an SOS.â

âStop. You know you need me. What are you doing out of Fulham?â

âYou make it sound like Dartmoor. Maybe it was.â Ron was too easygoing for full-blown rancor. Anyway, he had no need for rancor. It was all about the turf, the patch. Islington police would get on quite well without the rest of the Met horning in. âI ask again, what brought you here?â

âYour star witness.â Jury nodded toward Benny Keegan, who was talking to an older man, both of them anxiously watching and waiting. âI know Benny well, and I donât think heâs on intimate terms with Islington police.â

They had stepped from the room out onto a patio, a huge wooden deck bigger than the room itself. At one end were a table, two chairs, and a body. And Dr. Nancy.

âWhoâs this?â He looked down at Phyllis.

Phyllis was already kneeling beside the body, giving it a quick examination. She looked up. âDr. Phyllis Nancy. Superintendent Jury asked me to come along.â

âWeâve got a doctor,â said DS Chilten, in a tone more uncertain than annoyed. The victim wouldnât be needing one. He was lying on his back, shot in the chest, blood pooled at his side.

Phyllis looked at him. âOf course. I just happened to be there and came along. Busmanâs holiday.â She snapped on latex gloves sheâd borrowed from one of the technicians and turned back to the body. She had a manner that was so short on attitude it was all but

impossible to view her as a threat. âIâd like to turn him over?â

With a slight frown, Chilten nodded.

She did this in a single neat movement. It wasnât weight, it was leverage. It occurred to Jury that most things were. It was a thought, anyway. âWeâll be off in a minute; itâs your case, Ron.â

Chilten snapped his fingers at one of the crime scene operatives for a plastic bag, dropped something into it, and handed it to the technician. Then, in a considering sort of way, he folded first one, then another, stick of gum into his mouth and slowly chewed, as if thatâs what the nights were made for. âNot exactly.â

Jury raised his eyebrows. âNot exactly what?â

âMy case.â

âItâs Islingtonâs.â

âYeah, I mean itâs Luâs.â

Since he didnât add to that pronouncement, Jury figured he was in for a night of Chiltenâs little manufactured mysteries, smoke and mirrors mise-en-scÃ¨nes. âWho the hellâs Lou?â

Now Chilten raised his brows. âAguilar? You donât know DI Aguilar?â

âShould I? Donât make me dig all the way to China for the information.â

But Chilten was prepared to let Jury dig. He looked at the trayâthe two traysâdelivered that night by room service. Chilten turned to the waiters, Benny and the old man whose name was Gilbert Snow. âNow, is this tray of food what you brought up?â He was looking at Snow.

âThatâs it, except itâs been half-et.â

Chilten nodded. âYou didnât take anything from it, did you, Young Benny?â

âWhat?â Benny looked aghast that heâd be asked such a question. âIâd know betterân to take somethinâ from a crime scene, wouldnât I?â

âYou didnât *know* it was a crime scene, Young Benny. Did you?â Chiltenâs tone was the condescending one grown-ups use with children, the âHow-could-you-know-anything-that-mattered?â tone, you being only thirteen or ten, or six or eight. *No wonder kids clammed up,* thought Jury.

Benny said, âIf it wasnât a crime scene, well, he was pretty dead, wasnât he?â

A crime scene technician stuck his head around the doorjamb of the bathroom. ââScuse me, sir, but thereâs a dog in the shower.â

Chilten frowned. âThe victim had a *dog*? Why in hell hasnât it barked or something? Why would he beâ? Perhaps the villain wanted to get him out of the way.â

âLooks that way.â

Chilten took long strides toward the bathroom.

âSparky?â asked Jury.

Benny cringed, nodded. âSee, Sparky always waits for me in the alley. I was over an hour late because of this coffee delivery, and it was raining somethinâ awful. So I thought, well, no harm in him cominâ with me on this one delivery, so I got him into the lift and we come up here.â

Phyllis Nancy said, âIs this the Sparky who saved Superintendent Juryâs life?â

Bennyâs chest puffed out a little. âThass right.â He was happy to have Sparkyâs role remembered.

Chilten was back, the crime scene fellow following with the dog.

Sparky, a small white terrier, was quiet until he saw Jury, whereupon he started barking and wriggling.

Chilten asked, âWas this mutt here when you brought the coffee?â

Benny looked at Jury, saw by his expression heâd just as well tell the truth. âActually, Sparkyâs my dog.â

âYour dog. *Your* dog? Did he carry the tray, or what?â

The technician chortled. Chilten looked at him. He stopped. Chilten went on: âWhatâs the story on this dog, Young Benny?â

Jury watched Benny cringe at being addressed in this manner. But he replied, âLike I said, I just had him along with me. We were to go home right after.â

âIâm sure the management likes your dog running round a crime sceneââ

âWe dinât know it was a crime scene, did we?â

Jury turned away. Benny was cutting a bit too close to DS Chiltenâs bone, wasnât he?

âFunny.â Chilten looked down at Sparky. âAll we need, isnât it? A dead body and a dog.â

As far as Jury was concerned, there couldnât be enough dogs in the world for him: Arnold. Stone. Sparky. Mungo.

Benny said, âWhen I saw this dead man, well, I put Sparky in the bathroom there as I was afraid he might knock up against some bit of evidence.â

Skillfull, thought Jury. He put his hand on Bennyâs shoulder. They

all seemed to have forgotten that finding a dead body might be traumatic for a kid.

Chilten looked over at the door to the room. A man had just been admitted. âMr. Lewis?â

âThatâs right. Iâm pinch-hitting for the manager, the manager not being here this evening. You wanted to know about the, ah, victim? His name is Maples, Billy Maples.â Mr. Lewis looked grim. He could have done without this murderâs happening on his watch. âAll I can tell you is that he checked in this afternoon, about two oâclock. I did a quick computer search before I came up here. Well, I knew something bad had happened, didnât I?â

Chilten nodded. âGo on.â

âMr. Maples had listed his home address as Chelsea. Here. I wrote it and the phone number down for you.â Lewis held out a small piece of paper taken from a Zetter message pad. There was one like it by the telephone. He looked from Chilten to Jury, uncertain as to which one was in charge.

Jury inclined his head toward Chilten.

Chilten took the note. âOne thing, Mr. Lewis. These rooms on this floorâyou call them studios, right? Theyâre pricey, arenât they?â

Lewis shrugged. âYes, I expect they are. Superior studio is what this oneâs called. Then thereâs the deluxe, which is a little more. But they have some of the best views over London. Well, as you can see.â He swept his arm toward the patio. They stepped onto it and took in the Zetterâs view.

A view with a corpse, thought Jury. But it was still quite wonderful, the spire of St. Paulâs in one direction, the spire of the post office building in another. London at night and from this height was a knockout. He smiled at it, at London.

âI didnât take the booking, but I can find out exactly what transpired.â

âIf you would. I expect he could afford it, if that suit heâs wearing is any indication.â Chilten looked down at the body as if heâd call it back to life, just so he could ask about the suit. âI saw one like it in a window in upper Sloane Street. Get me any information you can, including telephone records. Outgoing, incoming calls. We havenât spotted a mobile yet, though itâs hard to believe he hadnât one, a sport like this.â

Jury smiled at the description. How long had it been since heâd heard âsportâ used in that way?

Chilten nodded toward the assistant manager. âThatâs all for now. Thank you.â

Mr. Lewis took his leave.

Phyllis rose, peeled off the gloves, shivered in the night air. âIâd say thatâs about right, something over an hour. Two hours would be stretching it. Well, but we know the time frame, right?

âThe dinner comes up around nine oâclock according to this Gilbertââ

âSnow, sir. Nine oâclock, right.â

âAnd the coffee comes up around ten oâclock.â

Ron nodded and flicked through his notebook.

How many pages could he possibly have accumulated if heâd only been here fifteen minutes before Jury?

âOkay. The waiter, Snow, brings up dinner at nine. Young Benny brings up the coffeeââ Notes consulted again. âAt ten or ten-ten. Heâs not absolutely sure, but knows thatâs close enoughââ

âExcuse me, sir.â

Benny was standing at Juryâs elbow, together with the old waiter.

âGil here says youâre missing somethinâ significant.â Benny brought that out as a dozen different syllables, probably to make sure Chilten and Jury understood the significance. âTell âem, Gil.â

The waiter, Gilbert Snow, looked to be in his sixties. He had sad eyes and a slightly sallow complexion, and although by no means corpulent seemed to have had his share of Zetter dinners.

âItâs this, like: the young gentleman orders his dinner be brought up, which is what I did. He then said he wanted coffee, but to be brought up around ten. He wanted coffee for two people, for *two*. He was very particular about that.â

Jury said, âHe was expecting someone, then.â

Benny nodded. So did Gil. âI mean, well, thatâs what youâd think, right?â

Jury wondered why Snow hadnât brought the coffee up himself, but didnât ask it. Save it for later. Unless Chilten asked. He didnât. Maybe he already had. Gilbert Snow seemed all too aware that except for the expected guest, he might have been the last person to see the victim alive, and who wants that on his platter?

âLetâs say time of death was one and a half hours ago. That includes the time it took us to get here, of course.â

âPhyllis?â Jury looked at her. âGive or take how much?â

âI canât say precisely. The time looks pretty fixed to me. You

donât often have a witness at both ends of a deathââ Her frown deepened. âI can be a little more exact whenâI mean when whoever does the autopsyâwhen thatâs done. But I donât see what youâre driving at.â

âRemember your Sherlock Holmes, Jury,â said Chilten.

âHeâs never far from my mind. What?â

âThe simplest theory is preferable. Is usually right.â

âThatâs not Holmes. Thatâs Occamâs razor.â

Phyllis stepped on Juryâs foot and gave him a look. Then she said to them, âIâm leaving. I think I should give Benny a ride, donât you?â

âTake the car.â Jury dug in his pocket for the keys.

She shook her head. âIâll get us a cab. Iâll call down to the desk.â

âI think Bennyâd better wait for the guvâner,â said Ron.

Jury sighed. âWhere in hell is this Detective Inspector Aguilar? Heâs taking his own sweet timeââ

âRight behind you.â

THREE

Jury had been standing with his back to the door. uickly he turned and saw that, obviously, Chiltenâs âLouâ wasnât male. Detective Inspector Aguilar was a woman.

There would be no argument about that. DI Aguilar had walked in and sucked all the oxygen out of the air. Tall, willowy, black hair, nearly black eyes, a faint golden glow to her skin. Aguilar: could be Latino, could be Spanish, South American, even Indian. The Lu could be Louise, Lucille, Louella, hell, she could be Lucretia Borgia, for all he cared. She looked like sheâd just come off a Paris runway with that shape, those cheekbones, and that hauteur, rather than out of an Islington police station. He wondered if her appearance always had this effect on her team. They stood, as if breathless and waiting. Except for Ron Chilten, whom Jury had never known to get breathless about anything.

Rather than ask who he was, in a gesture of utter disdain, DI Aguilar raised her eyebrows.

He almost laughed. âRichard Jury.â

This did not satisfy the eyebrows, which stayed up.

âSuperintendent, New Scotland Yard CID.â

Still not satisfied, but she did use words. âAnd how do you come to be at our crime scene, Superintendent?â

Chiltenâwho was enjoying the little contretemps enormously, as Jury had known he wouldâoffered: âThe kid, Benny Keegan, called him. Benny found the body.â

She nodded. âWhoâve we got here?â

One of the crime scene technicians handed her a wallet. âHis nameâs Billy Maples.â

She looked through it, at the driverâs license, the credit cards, whatever bits and bobs were stuffed in it, then took out the license

and handed the wallet to Ron.

DI Aguilar then turned to Benny, who, with Sparky, had been hovering by Phyllis. âYouâre Benny,â she said.

âYes, sirâuhâmuâm.â

âAnd you?â She was addressing Sparky.

âHis nameâs Sparky.â Phyllis said this. âAnd Iâm Doctor Phyllis Nancy. Pathologist.â

Get over it. Thatâs what Jury heard Phyllis saying.

âAnd has the dog given up anything useful?â

Bennyâs eyes narrowed. âOnây his dinner. We been here for a goodish hour, yâknow.â Then he repeated what heâd told Jury and Ron Chilten.

Lu Aguilar thanked him quite simply. âYou can go, Benny, but I may want to talk to you later. And Iâll expect you to keep mum about all this.â

Jury could imagine how mum Benny would keep once he got back to his friends and cohorts beneath Waterloo Bridge. âMumâ would take a dive straight into the Thames.

But the boy nodded obediently.

Phyllis said, âCome on, Benny; Iâll give you a ride home. You and Sparky.â She turned to Aguilar. Although Phyllisâs tone was frosty, her hair seemed to be on fire. âYouâll have your own pathologist. Iâve told DS Chilten my findings.â

Heâd seen her hair spark before. Heâd never seen it go up in flames. Her smile could have followed. Phyllis did not wait to be excused. She said to Jury, âIâll see you tomorrow, I expect.â

âI expect so.â He felt quietly uncomfortable about his private life leaking into his public one. Then felt immediately remorseful for the thought. If there was anyone who respected privacy and knew the need to keep oneâs work separate, it was Phyllis.

They left with Sparky.

Ron filled DI Aguilar in on what had been discovered up to that point.

âSo where was the dinner companion?â

âCoffee companion, more, who might have been the murderer.â

He nodded toward Snow, who was sitting on a side chair. âThatâs the waiter, Gilbert Snow, the one that brought up the dinner. Then Benny Keegan brings up coffee at ten-ten.â Chilten looked at his notes.

âCall him over,â she said, nodding toward the waiter.

Ron did.

She could, reflected Jury, have walked over to Snow.

The old waiter repeated to DI Aguilar the same story he had told Jury. Then he asked her if he could leave.

âBeen a long day, Iâm not up to this kind of thing.â He pounded his chest softly. âDodgy heart, like.â

She smiled at him, nodded. He left.

Ron was talking. âI guess what Iâm wondering is, if Maples was murdered between dinner and coffee, where was the shooter when Benny came along? I mean, could he still have been here?â

âIf theyâre all telling the truth,â said DI Aguilar, before turning to exchange words with the two crime scene technicians who had yet to leave. âAnything?â

âThings, yes, but nothing to nail down, mâum. Weâre through here. I mean except for Connie. Heâs in the bathroom putting the drain back together.â

Aguilar nodded and watched them go. They moved quietly, as if to keep from disturbing the air around her, as if it too might be needed for future examination. Then she turned back to Jury and Chilten.

Chilten frowned. âBy they, you meanâ?â

âThe two room service waiters and the desk clerk,â said Aguilar.

Chilten flipped through his notes and it seemed to take forever.

âOkay. Snow brings up the food at nine, he said.â Ron stopped to indicate the remnants of the supper. âHamburger, chips, whatever that salad is.â

âHouse salad,â said Aguilar. Sheâd picked up the room service menu, which she now opened and pointed to.

Jury smiled. Perhaps it was Aguilarâs moment of domesticity that made him smile.

Chilten went on: âSay Gilbert Snow left about nine, Maples had about fifteen minutes of eating, maybe more, when whoever he was to meet gets here. Presumably our shooter. Then Benny shows up at ten and finds the body. Desk clerk puts Maples coming in around eight-thirty. Thereâs confirmation between the two of them. I donât think they could be lying.â

âThe chef would have to be lying too,â Jury said. âOr whoever prepared this food. Itâs only a burger but I still think it was carefully arranged, with all of those little china pots of condiments.â Mustard, relish, and ketchup had been laid on with a heavy hand.

Aguilar smiled. Or smirked. âWhyâs that? It could have been

anyone. Snow himself. Itâs only a burger and chips.â

Jury shook his head.

Aguilar nodded. âCheck with the kitchen, Ron. The restaurant here is supposed to be really hot, so the superintendent is probably right about the painstaking presentation. And bag this stuff.â

âThe meal? Why?â asked Ron.

âWhy not? You never know.â She turned to Jury.

âYouâre afraid that Benny might have walked in on the killer? That he might still have been here?â

âPossibly.â

She said, âBut the boy wouldnât have stood around, surely. When he saw the body he ran out.â

âNo. He called me. From here. Bennyâs not exactly the type of lad to run.â Jury looked around the room. âThe killer might have thought Benny had seen something, if he was still here, and thatâs a big if. Our shooter might have forgotten somethingâbut this is useless speculation.â

âThatâs it, mâum,â said the technician who mustâve been Connie, coming out of the bathroom.

Chilten nodded. âIf you donât need me, Iâm off.â He stuck a cigarette in his mouth, not lighting it. âYou need a lift?â

âNo, thanks, Ron,â said Jury. âI think Iâll walk for a while. Helps me think.â

âIâll take him,â said Aguilar, looking at neither of them and dismissing Juryâs comment about walking. The ones remaining now were the two who were about to move the body into a body bag.

Ron Chilten gave Jury a brief salute and left the room, together with Connie. Conrad, probably.

What Aguilar was doing was having a long look at the food on the table. With a ballpoint pen she raised the uneaten half of the hamburger, let it drop. She looked at the potatoes, poked the salad. âIâll bet that mayonnaise is homemade.â

The scene-of-crime fellows were still waiting for a signal to proceed, but she was still taken up with the food. âIâm surprised he got a burger and chips. Iâm surprised he *could* get it, to tell the truth. Looking at whatâs on the menu.â She shook her head. âEverythingâs half eaten.â

âI noticed.â

She nodded and gave him a long, considering look.

But he knew it was a thought, not him, she was considering.

âDoesnât that strike you as strange?â

âNo. He was interrupted.â

âButâ She frowned, made a foray again with the pen. Then she shrugged, and they moved out onto the patio. She looked down at the body and the two technicians looked inquiringly at her. She nodded. They zipped up the bag, moved it to a stretcher, and bore it away.

âBilly,â she said as if tasting the name for the first time. âThatâs how he signed the card downstairs. Not William or Bill.â She was poking the ballpoint in a large ashtray that held coins, matches, and a room card. She slipped the pen through a matchbook cover and raised it. âDust. Itâs that club over the road there.â She tilted her head and made as if to look out over the dark balcony. âHeâd been there, according to the desk clerk.â

âTonight?â

She nodded. âAfter a gallery show he went to and before he came back here for his late supper.â

Ah. Here was another reason to hate her: that sheâd been more efficient than he himself. The first reason was her beauty.

Lu Aguilar started to walk around the room, trailing her long fingers over the backs of the chairs, inspecting the old books the hotel provided, looking at paintings, less like a detective seeking evidence than a woman sizing up a property to see if it pleased her. Then she was back to stand beside him. âHe met someone here, or was to, who might not necessarily have been his killer.â

Jury shook his head. âIâd think thatâs exactly whom he met: someone heâd mistakenly thought to be his friend. Heâd ordered coffee for two. What makes you think there was a third party?â

She didnât answer that; instead she raised the pen on which the matchbook swung like a little gate in a wind.

âLetâs go.â

âThere?â

âDust. Come on.â

Four

He knew better than to try to buy her a drink. Probably a stickler for procedure. If sheâd been there with the authority to do it, sheâd have tossed him out on his arse after that Hester Street business.

âWhiskey, rocks.â She ordered this up from the Adonis of a barman. She turned to Jury, raised her eyebrows. âYou?â

So much for the stickler. âThe same. No ice. You like *ice* in it? I thought that was largely an American perversion.â

âI do. Where have you been? Ice is in.â

He put his fingers in a bowl of mixed nuts and palmed a few into his mouth. The barman slid two chunky glasses toward them. When Aguilar went for the bag slung across her chair, Jury put his hand on her arm and shook his head.

âLet me.â He pulled out his wallet. The barman named a sum that would renovate the Tower and Jury slapped down a bill.

She raised her glass. âJust like a real date. Thanks.â

Of course the tone was sardonic, but he still smiled.

She drew Billy Maplesâs driverâs license from her coat pocket. âHave you seen him in here?â

The barman glanced at it, shook his head. âDonât think so.â

âHave you been here all evening?â

He nodded. âCame on at six oâclock.â

As far as Jury was concerned, the barman was the type who routinely lied to the police. Just second nature. âWhatâs your name?â

âMatt.â

It would be. Jury took the license and shoved it up to his face. âHe comes here a lot. Suppose we look again.â

Matt glanced from Jury to Aguilar and back. âYou the police?â When Jury nodded, Matt went on. âWhatâs he done? What do you want him for.â

âNothing,â said Aguilar. âHeâs dead.â

Mattâs quick eyes went back from Aguilar to Jury as if he knew what dead meant in this case. âHe was murdered?â

âWhy do you think that?â

Now he regained some of his former insouciance. âCome on, youâre police. You wouldnât be doing this for some bloke who went into cardiac arrest.â

âThe Zetter, across the road, Iâm sure you know it, says he had been in here earlier. So who else was working here? I mean besides you and the general rave-ups?â She inclined her head toward the groupâguitars, drums, keyboardâmaking something that wasnât exactly music.

âYou could try Ty Haigh. Heâs one of the guys at the bar out there, where you came in. He might know him.â Matt looked down at the license, still lying on the bar.

Aguilar rolled off her bar stool.

Straight-faced, Jury asked, âYou want to dance?â

That earned him a look he wouldnât soon forget. He spread his hands. âYouâre the one who said it was a date.â

Â

âYeah, thatâs Billy Maples,â said Ty Haigh, whose muscular arms were on display in a sleeveless vest, âand heâs a friend. Iâve known him for a year or so.â He was working on a champagne bottle, loosening the wire from around the cork. âWhy?â He smiled broadly, which made his face even handsomer.

Jury wondered if looks were one of the top criteria for working here.

Ty added, âHeâs not in trouble, is he?â

Aguilar pocketed the license and said, âNo. Heâs out of trouble now.â

âMeaning?â Ty had stopped smiling.

Jury hated that swift change in a look, always did, and cut it short. âIâm sorry. Heâs dead.â

âChrist.â Ty breathed this out.

âYou knew him well?â asked Jury.

Ty nodded vaguely and then seemed to want to take it back, that or he really wasnât sure about how well he knew Billy Maples. He said, âIâm an artist. This job buys canvas and paint, not much else. The gallery, the one near Smithfield Market, itâs called Melville

Gallery. They had the showing today; theyâve shown my work. Thatâs how I met him, Billy. He donates a lot of money to it; heâsâhe wasâa very generous fellow. You could always count on Billy. God.â He propped his elbows on the bar, leaned his head into his hands. âI canât believe it.â Jury thought he might be going to cry, but he looked up at them, dry eyed.

âHe had money, then?â said Aguilar.

Ty nodded. âFamily money, I gathered. He certainly seemed to. Didnât work or anything.â

Aguilar had her notebook out and a pen uncapped. A fountain pen. Jury hadnât seen one in years.

She said, âWhere do they live, his family?â

âInâ¦Kent? No, East Sussex, I think. Somewhere in East Sussex, not far from the coast.â

âWhat do you know about them, except that theyâre rich?â

âNext to nothing. He never talked about them, didnât much like them is what I thought. Except his grandfather, who he seemed really fond of. And I think there was a grandmother he liked. Not a couple, I mean one on his fatherâs side, one on his motherâs.â

âDo they live in Sussex?â

âNo. London. The grandfather lives in Chelsea, I think. So did Billy. Near Sloane Square. He didnât really talk much about himself. We talked about art, mostly.â Ty laughed and then abruptly stopped, apparently thinking it the wrong time for laughter. âHe didnât know all that much, though.â

âHe had a flat in Sloane Street is our information.â

âRight.â Ty looked off across the room, oddly silent in this part of the club. âThe war.â

âWhat?â said Jury.

âThe Second World War. Billy was fascinated by that period. He was always going off to the War Museum, that place in Lambeth? It had something to do with his granddadâthe war did, I mean. He was some kind of code expert?â

Jury stared at him. âWait. The grandfather: he wouldnât be Sir Oswald Maples, would he?â

Ty thought. âI donât remember Billy ever saying. He just referred to him as granddad. Said he had an important job during the war, breaking codes, or something.â

âWho is this?â DI Aguilar asked Jury.

âSir Oswald Maples played a significant part in codes and ciphers.

He was at Bletchley.â

Ty looked blank. âWhatâs that?â

Were we ever really this young? wondered Jury.

Aguilar said, âThey were code breakers, werenât they? Top secret stuff. Bletchley Park was where they gathered.â

Jury nodded.

âAnd you know him? This Oswald Maples?â

Again, Jury nodded.

âGood,â said Aguilar. To Ty she said, âWeâll probably want to talk to you again. Give me a number.â

He did, together with a Clerkenwell address. âThe place is getting too rich for my blood,â he added.

She capped her pen, stowed it and the notebook in her bag. Smiled. âMove to Wandsworth. Thatâll thin your blood out.â

Ty laughed and again abruptly stopped.

Aguilar and Jury headed out the door.

âCarâs over there,â she said. âIn St. John.â

They walked along Clerkenwell Road.

Clerkenwell was becoming more trendy with each passing day, more upscale, more of a draw to the young professionals. It was just on the boundary of the City, where he had of late been spending a lot of his time. It was also one part of Islington, where he spent less time, though Islington was home.

âWeâll need to see his flat tomorrow.â

âMaplesâs? We? I was under the impression I was intruding.â

âYou are. But it turns out you know everyone. What choice do I have?â

Was she trying not to smile? Jury said, âGod, but itâs a bitch, isnât it, to have to ask Scotland Yard CID for help?â

âI didnât say I needed help; I said you know everyone. It saves time if you do the interviewing of the grandfather.â

She had stopped by a gray Fiat, a car that Jury had always thought a joke. âYou live in Islington, correct?â

He was mildly surprised. âYes, but how did you know?â

âI know a lot about you. Have you forgotten? You were splashed all over the news not long ago. Get in.â

They took St. John Street to Islington High Street and Upper Street, made a few right turns and came to his street.

âRight here.â

She pulled up, braked, and before Jury could say thanks or good

night, she was out of the car.

He watched her walk around to the pavement, stand for a moment looking in at him. When he didnât get out, she threw out her arms in a fine gesture of impatience.

Jury got out of the car, puzzled. âWhat?â

âYouâve got the keys.â She turned and walked up the front steps.

When he stopped being stunned, or pretending to himself he was, he followed and unlocked the front door.

âWhich floor?â

âThe next.â

âThank God. Iâm too tired to climb more than one flight.â

Jury smiled as they walked up that flight. He had the impression sheâd have climbed to the top floor, if need be.

He unlocked his door, stood back, and held out an arm to usher her in. He told himself he still didnât know exactly what she was doing here or what she wanted.

Except to drop her coat on his old faded sofa and say, âThanks, yes, I will have that drink.â

He stood there as if he were the visitor and she the tenant of his flat and looked at her for a long moment.

She didnât move her eyes from his face. Indeed, she seemed to be charting it as if it might reveal a destination. âYou can get me a drink. And in the circumstances, you can call me Lu.â

âGod, thanks. But I donât have any ice, Lu.â

âHell. Now weâll have to make up something else to do.â She took a step toward him, her dark eyes never leaving his face.

Why this pretense of surprise? He was not surprised; heâd just been shoving it aside. From the moment sheâd walked into that first room, heâd known in some dimly lit part of his head that this was going to happen.

He pulled her to him and their lips dissolved into a kiss. It was long, infinite, the horizon gone. There should have been another word for kiss. Had he pulled her down to her knees, to the rug, or she him? Did he shove her down on the floor, or she him? They were rolling over, pushing at clothes, trying to unwrap each other, trapped in some cocoon, trying to pull apart to do it, but only tangling more.

Then he did pull her up and into the bedroom and down onto the bed.

They separated, finally. They lay there hardly breathing, as if the breath had been knocked out of them.

Eventually, he said, âHow are we going to be able to work together?â

âWe arenât. Youâre off the case.â

âNo, Iâm not. You need me.â

âYes. But this way.â She slid on top of him and it was like slipping into the sea.

Held together again they rolled across and off the bed, he hitting his head on the nightstand and not noticing, she twisting her foot in something, blanket or rugânot noticingâand then pulling themselves by some act of levitation up and onto the bed. It was turmoil, like grabbing at air and finding flesh.

âThis,â she said, âis too frightening. I thought we were finished.â

âWeâll never be finished.â He reached for her, but she pulled away.

âIâm leaving. Right now. Iâll find the door.â

She gathered up her clothes, a delicate trail of them, laid out almost by designâbra, panties, skirt, sweater, coatâdressed as she went and went out the door.

He heard it close.

He lay there, unable to move. Had he been the one whoâd had to leave, he didnât know if he could. What was it? It wasnât love, it was something else. He thought of those hurricanes that battered the coast of Florida every summer.

This wasnât the purple light of a summer night in Spain. It was a hurricane.

Five

Forensic had already been over it, but Jury wanted to see Billy Maplesâs flat for himself. There were other things besides forensic evidence that might go a step toward understanding Billyâs life.

It was in a building with few flats and a caged lift; it was handsome and undoubtedly pricey. In this area, Chelsea, Knightsbridge, Belgravia, youâd be looking at half a million quid, he bet. It had not one but two en suite bedrooms, one with a small sitting room, the other with a connecting den or study.

âIâll take this side,â said Ron. âYou go there.â

Jury smiled. Under the aegis of DI Aguilar, Ron was in charge here.

The study was generous in size, bookshelves across one wall and the overflow caught in neat stacks on the floor in front of the lower shelf.

The books werenât there to fill out the decor, either. Jury pulled out and examined several; they were much thumbed and marked. Billy Maples liked to read. It was the sort of room that anyone who liked to read longed for: deep cushioned chairs, including one of dark supple leather with a matching footrest. A floor lamp, a glass-topped side table.

From what Jury could tell, Billy favored the nineteenth century, a lot of it AmericanâMelville, Hawthorne, and a surprising number of novels by Henry James.

One shelf was taken up with books about the Second World War, reflecting his interest in Sir Oswaldâs life, ostensibly. Assuming Oswald Maples was his grandfather.

There were two paintings, both showing the tortured influence of someone like Francis Bacon. The dull, boxed-in form of a man one could hardly distinguish from the thick woods around him. For

torture, Jury preferred Munch.

There was a desk, not large, with a leather swivel chair. He went round to the front and started pulling out drawers. He sat down and looked at a small silver-framed photograph of Billy and another man. They looked as if theyâd been skiing or involved in some other winter sport. A lot of snow, a mountain.

Ron came in carrying some letters. âFellow that Maples lived with.â He waved the envelopes and sat down.

Jury waited. Ron did not expand upon his information. Jury said, âIâm with you so far. What about him?â

âWellââRon looked down at the lettersââIâd say heâs German.â

âAnd does he have a name? German or otherwise?â Blood from a stone.

âKurt Brunner. At least thatâs the name on these.â He looked down at the envelopes. âBerlin. Kurt Brunner. Maplesâs âpartner,â as they say?â

Jury turned the photo around so that Ron could see it. âMaybe, maybe not. This chapâs a lot older than Billy Maples.â

Ron shrugged. âWhenâs that ever made a difference? Father figure, maybe? That can get seriously sexual.â

âSometimes a father figure is only a father figure.â Karl Brunner, though, didnât really look the type. He was older, but in very good shape and with a handsome face.

âCould be.â

âWhat about the weapon, the gun?â

âWe havenât found it. Probably a .38, possibly a Luger. German?â Ron squiggled his eyebrows up and down.

Jury leaned back in the swivel chair, turned it right and left, left and right, kept doing it as he thought. âWhy did Billy Maples take a room at the Zetter, which isâhow far from here?â

Ron scratched the back of his neck. It looked inflamed. âCould take you over a half hour in rush hour. This gallery is near Smithfield Market and thatâs not far from the Zetter. Half hour, maybe, no more.â

âSo why did he stay at the Zetter?â

âBecause he had the three hundred quid to do it. He had money, all right, a trust fund. Maybe he stayed at the Zetter because he wanted to be near the club? Dust?â

âHe was in it. Why would he have to be near it? He was meeting someone, and if so, we could conjecture that it was someone he

didnât want to meet in his own flat.â

Ron shook his head. âI wouldnât draw that conclusion. He wants to do all this: go to gallery, to Dust, to meeting someone at the hotelâso he picks a place right there. The Zetter. The best solution,â he said, showing some teeth, âis the easier one.â

Jury snorted. âBack at me, right? Maybe itâs as you say.â Jury rose. âIâve got to go, Ron. Iâve got to tell his grandfather before the *Telegraph* does. Let me know if you come up with anything here.â

Six

Jury stood in front of the mews house off Cadogan Square with his finger on the bell, hoping he was wrong though fairly certain he wasnât. This was not owing to his powers of deduction but to a very simple notion: how many men named Maples who had âworked on codesâ and done it at Bletchley Park could there be?

Just one.

This time Jury hoped for the housekeeper, anything to delay telling Oswald Maples this sad news. Right now, Jury sincerely wished Lu Aguilar *had* taken him off the case; if he and Aguilar had a grain of sense between them, he *would* be off the case, he wouldnât be within twenty miles of the Islington police. Emotional involvement with the detective in chargeâis that what he was calling it this morning? How could anything so violently physical be talked away as âemotional involvementâ?

Then he thought of Phyllis and his throat went dry.

âSuperintendent!â

Smiling, Sir Oswald Maples had answered the door himself, walking with the help of a single cane. Most of the time he needed two. If thatâs what accounted for the smile, probably a good day.

It was about to turn bad.

âIs something wrong, Mr. Jury?â

Yes, Jury wanted to say, *I am fucking up my life and your grandson was murdered last night.* âSir Oswald,â he said as he tried to work some sense into the day. He knew he looked grim and the grimness was all for himself, he was ashamed to say. âI need to talk to you.â A peculiar way of putting it.

âOf course. Come in, come in.â With a little difficulty, Oswald Maples moved aside to allow Jury to pass into the tiny foyer. âIt canât be all that bad, Superintendent.â Oswald gave a short laugh.

Jury opened his mouth to make some rejoinder and didnât. They went into the living room. Jury sat down and Oswald sat across from him on a blue sofa. Beneath their feet was a handsome Turkish carpet, swimming with muted blues, reds, and greens.

Jury said, âThere was a young man murdered last night in Clerkenwell. I thinkâwe thinkâhe may have been related to you, may be your grandson.â He let that rest for a moment.

Maples had picked up his cane, holding it in front of him, both hands on the knob at the top. He sat forward and bent his head over his hands. He was silent.

âHis name was Billy Maples.â

In the deep silence that sometimes attends bad news, Sir Oswald waited, as if another piece of news might cancel out what heâd just heard. None was forthcoming. âMake us a drink, man.â He leaned heavily on his cane, his head bent, studying the carpet.

Jury splashed some brandy into a balloon glass and handed it to him. âIâm sorry; Iâm truly sorry.â He felt hopelessly inadequate. He sat down opposite Oswald on a chair covered in the same blue as the sofa.

Maples said nothing for a few moments, just sat looking at the brandy in his glass and finally drank it in one go. Then he placed the glass on the antique side table carefully, as if it, and not he, needed the care. He cleared his throat. âAll right, tell me.â

Jury did. Every detail.

Oswald sat back. âIâll spare you a few questions, Superintendent. First, I canât think of anyone at all who could possibly want to do this to Billy, but then, I didnât know his friendsâor his enemies, though I canât imagine Billy having enemies. But I do, did, know Billy. He had a quixotic nature and he was very intense, given to moods. He had trouble with his parents because of that, since theyâre not.â

Jury smiled slightly.

âYou know what I mean; you yourself are intense. Donât give me that look, of course you are. So you know what itâs like to deal with superficial people. Iâm only saying they didnât understand Billy. And nor did I. But I understood him *better.* The thing is he was quite unpredictable. Like his mum.â Oswald smiled. The smile looked hurt.

âYour daughter?â

âNo, no. My son, Roderickâs, first wife, Mary. She died.â The smile vanished. âI was very fond of her. So was Billy. He was a child when she died. She set up a trust fund for him; thatâs what he lives

on. Maryâs own mother, Billyâs maternal grandmother, also lives in London, but I seldom see her.â He held up the cane in explanation. âHer name is Rose Ames, and she does occasionally come to see me. A very nice woman. My own wife has been dead for seven years. So has Roseâs husband, his other grandfather. Been dead, I mean.â He stopped. He went on. âRoderickâmy sonâis a good enough man, but rather stuffy. And his second wife, Olivia, is quite a bit younger, forty, I think. Sheâs beautiful in the way porcelain is beautiful, but she does drain one. I think she tried to drain Billy. Not Roderick, though. He seems impervious to emotional abuse. Perhaps he was abused as a child; perhaps those around him were cold, especially his father. I donât know.â

Jury knew Sir Oswald was tired and that he should go, but he didnât follow what the man had just said. âHis father? I donât understand. I thought Roderick was *your* son.â

âAdopted. After the war. He was mine. Have you talked to him and Olivia? Have you talked to Kurt Brunner? Thatâs your man, Superintendent. He and Billy were very close. Heâs still in Rye, I think.â

âRye?â

âYes, thatâs where theyâve been living for the last eight or nine months. Lamb House. I mean there and his Chelsea flat.â

âBut thatâs National Trust property. Thatâs the home of Henry James.â

âI know. Billy took over the tenancy. Billy was extremely fond of Jamesâs writing, and I expect he thought it would be a lark. Heâd read somewhere that the Trust was looking for someone. So he applied. He would have met their fussy high standards.â He looked at the floor, drew his cane around the elaborate design at his feet. âBut then Billy would have met anyoneâs standards, I think.â

For some reason this was the most sorrowful thing Oswald Maples had said. Jury offered, âDetectives from Islington are going to see your son and his wife today. In East Sussex. But Kurt Brunnerââ

âBillyâs assistant, or secretary, or plain friend. Talk to him. Itâs not your case?â There was disappointment in his tone.

âIâm officially helping out. I intend to help a lot.â He smiled.

âThank you for sending yourself here, Superintendent. I appreciate it.â

âNot at all.â Jury rose. âIâll be going, but Iâll probably want to talk to you later on. No, donât get up. Iâll see myself out.â

Oswald Maples looked grateful, whether because he wouldnât have to hoist himself off the sofa or because Jury would be back, he didnât know.

âDo you read James?â he mused, not looking for an answer, but sitting there, tracing the rugâs complicated red and blue pattern with the tip of his cane. âThereâs a story of his called âThe Figure in the Carpet.â Itâs about a writer who has this bittersweet awareness that no critic who has written about his books has ever understood the most important thing in them, his âlittle trick,â which he describes as being a figure in a Persian carpet. It blends in so well that it becomes invisible although itâs perfectly distinct, if you can see it.â Sir Oswald looked up at Jury. âI hope you donât have that problem, Superintendent, with Billyâs murder. You must come up against it all the time, that transparent figure, the one that you want so much to see and yet can only see through.â Oswald smiled bleakly. âYouâll have to forgive me this little lecture. Itâs just that I do hope you catch him.â

Jury looked down at him, and nodded, and left.

For what could he say? What could anyone?

SEVEN

âYouâre coming down with something,â said Wiggins the next morning as he waited for the kettle to boil.

âNo,â said Jury, who felt he was coming down with everything, settling into his office chair. âI didnât sleep much last night.â

âLooks as if you didnât sleep much this *year.* Your eyes look like something on the ocean floor. You need a cuppa. Be ready in a minute. Oh, the guvânor wants to see you.â Wiggins was concentrating now on peeling what looked like bits of bark off what looked like a root. *Or,* thought Jury, *it could be a branch from the rare jingoborah tree.*

Donât ask, Jury told himself. He had to bite his tongue.

The kettle was on the boil and Wiggins pulled out the hot plate plug, poured water into two mugs whose tea bags tumbled upward to the top. Aside from the mugs and the root, the surface of Sergeant Wigginsâs desk was as uncluttered and clear as an ice floe.

âFiona rang at eight-thirty. Says he wants to see you the minute you come in,â Wiggins added, as he waited for the tea bags to leach color into the water.

âThat minute, alas, is lost to us forever.â

Wiggins chortled.

âAnd did he give us a clue as to why he was so anxious to see me? â

âNo.â

Eight-thirty. Jury was surprised DCS Racer was even in the office. Unless heâd been sleeping rough after a rave and couldnât make it home. Talking to Racer was no way to start off a day. Jury picked up the phone and rang Fiona Clingmore, Racerâs secretary of many years (and who still looked just as she had looked when she first came here). âIâm here,â he said. âYou can inform your boss the games can

begin.â

âTook your time, dinât you?â she said and hung up.

âI expect,â said Wiggins, âitâs about the Harry Johnson debacle.â He spooned sugar into one of the mugs, what looked like a never-ending stream of it.

âDebacle? Iâd hardly call it that. Anyway, it wasnât my case. Thatâs Surrey police. Detective Inspector Dryer. We are not reaching back into the mists of time on this; it only happened a little over two weeks ago.â

âIâd say if it wasnât for you, those two kids might be dead.â

âWrong. Wrong. Mungo saved them.â Jury unhitched his jacket from the back of his chair and got up.

âMungoâs a dog.â

He grabbed his mug of tea. âDonât I know it.â

Â

âThe assistant commissioner wants to know why youâre ignoring his order to lay off Harry Johnson,â said Racer, the guvânor and chief superintendent.

âI donât know what youâre talking about. Did Harry make a complaint?â

Racer said nothing, probably because he didnât know. Jury asked, âWhy doesnât the AC tell Detective Inspector Dryer to lay off? Itâs Surrey policeâs case, not mine.â

âExactly, Jury. Not yours.â

Jury drank his tea and kept his face empty, an expression he never had any trouble with in here, where emptiness was the dish *du jour*.

Racer went on ignoring Tom Dryerâs role in the Surrey case. âThereâs not a shred of evidence that says Harry Johnson is guilty of abducting those children.â

Jury said nothing, just watched the cat Cyril, who had materialized out of one of his nowheres and was now down on the carpet behind Racer, stalking between bookcase and drinks cupboard. Cyril had learned how to open the drinks cupboard. As far as Jury knew Cyril wasnât after a drink.

âAnd now,â said Racer with relish, âI hear youâre moonlighting again.â

Jury feigned surprise. âMoonlighting?â

âYouâre investigating a murder that properly belongs to the Islington police.â

âI was there because a boy I know discovered the body.â

âHe should have called Islingââ

âDo you think that every British citizen knows the structure of the Metropolitan Police?â He sat forward to say this; now he sat back and sighed. âI told him to call the hotel management and have them in turn call the station.â

âSo what were you doing there?â

âI told you. This lad, Benny Keegan, is twelveâwell, now thirteenâyears old. He knows me. He was scared.â The first two statements were certainly true. But he wondered about the third as he watched Cyril study the bottom doors of the cabinet. Now a paw reached out and worked its way between the doors and pulled slightly. As Cyril pushed inside, the bottles rattled a bit. Racer didnât seem to hear it. He was too busy lecturing Jury. The paw reached out again, this time from the inside, and pulled the door inward. Not closed, but nearly.

âWell, get your skates on, Jury, and get this damned Clerkenwell hotel thing sorted.â He mused. âIâve heard of it.â

Jury asked innocently, âClerkenwell?â

â*No!* The Zetter. Very good restaurant. I got a call fromââRacer looked down at a yellow pad on which heâd made notes (well, a note, as there seemed to be one line of writing)ââan Inspector Algarââ

âAguilar.â

âYes. Who said theyâd like you to assist them, especially as you know this lad. Get this Harry Johnson thing wound up, for Godâs sakes.â

âItâs not my case.â

Racer smacked his hand down on the table so hard that even the whiskey bottles shivered like wind chimes. âIf you say it once more, Iâll have you *working* for Surrey.â

âItâs Tom Dryerâs patch. The body was found in Surreyââ

âIt might be Dryerâs patch, but youâre the one getting all the publicity! It wasnât enough your getting that press in the Hester Street thing, now youâve got the rags on our back about this Belgravia house, also involving kiddies, I might add, and nothing gets up the publicâs nose like kiddies being molested.â

âThey werenât molested. Abducted, but not molested.â

âIt makes no difference, people get wrathful about children being mistreated.â

Jury leaned forward again. âLook. Iâve said it again and again to

the *Daily Excrescence on Lies and Bad Taste,* I didnât save those children. The dog did.â

Racer ran his locked fingers over his bald pate. âOh God, that goddamned dog again! Thatâs just so much sentimental rubbish. Of course the damned dog didnât rescue them. So then you get credit for not taking credit. You should have been a goddamned politician; by now youâd be PM!â

âIf youâre going to torture yourself with the vagaries of the *Daily Express,* you need a drink. Is that all?â Jury got up.

âOh go on, get out of here.â

On his way out of the office, he left the door open. He smiled at Fiona and stood there for a moment. He heard Racer get up. Three seconds later there was a monstrous *ya-owwwlll*! which could have been Racer or Cyril or both.

âWhat fun,â he said to Fiona, as Cyril rushed through the door.

It struck him as he walked back to his office that Cyrilâs way was his way: stretched out and low to the ground. *Oh, for Godâs sakes*, he reconsidered. *Cyril could run rings around you any day.*

Â

Wiggins looked up from some paperwork when Jury walked in.

âSomeâ paperwork hardly described it. Jury looked at a desk awash in it: papers, folder, envelopes, memos, directives, printed matter about the Metropolitan Police. Wiggins might have been the Metâs publicist.

âWiggins, twenty minutes ago there wasnât a scrap anywhere near your desk. It was like a no-fly zone for paper. Where in hell did this lot come from?â

âOh, this? Messenger. You know, comes round at eleven every day. But donât worry, Iâll have this sorted in a jiff.â

In awe, Jury watched Wigginsâs fingers, moving faster than a Vegas card dealerâs, toss, flip, pitch, and flick the deskâs contents into waste basket, drawer, and file.

âAmazing. You missed your calling; you shouldâve been a dip.â

Wiggins stretched his upper lip, Humphrey Bogart style. âThanks, sweetheart. Oh, Dr. Nancy called. Says youâll want to see her. And DS Chilten called. Itâs on your desk.â

Jury looked at the messages: Ron, Phyllis.

âAguilar wants you.â

That was one way of putting it.

âIâll be in the morgue,â Jury said.
That was another way.

EIGHT

She was gowned in greenâgreen coverall, green apronâleaning over a middle-aged, corpulent corpse. Her gloves glistened with blood.

She looked up. âRichard! You look like hell; you look like him.â She pointed to the body beneath her hands, chest cavity open for all to see. Quickly, Phyllis smiled.

Maybe thatâs how she hoped heâd look. Tentatively, Jury returned the smile. He said nothing.

Phyllis moved to another stainless steel slab, stripped off her gloves, raised the sheet on the body of Billy Maples. âYou came about Billy.â

I came about you. Oh, he was in fine fettle, he was! âWhat have you got?â That sounded cold. Was this how he was to traverse the ground between them now? Adopting attitudes that she would most likely never believe?

He saw her watching him, and although but a few seconds elapsed between them, it felt like an hour.

She said his name, âBilly.â It was as if she had to snag his attention. âHe died from the first bullet that entered the chest; it caused lung collapse from broken ribs, tore the esophagus, and exited; the second inflicted more internal damage: liver, bone, vertebrae. But itâs the first that killed him. No surprises here.â

âIâm off this case, Phyllis.â He had decided this the moment he saw her, and would reverse that decision when he saw Aguilar. And it was a stupid thing to say. What was that supposed to do? Cause her to pardon him? But he didnât know if she knew there was anything to pardon him *for*. Oh, she probably knew, just not the extent of it. He shut his eyes. He opened them again.

Her arms folded, her head cocked to one side, she looked disbelieving of what heâd just said, which sheâd misunderstood. âThe

damned *idiots.* There did look like a lot of fulminating jealousies and thwarted egos in that hotel room.â She waved her hand over the cold body. âAnd do they want my Billy back?â

The way she said that, Jury felt tears crowding at the corners of his eyes.

âNo. Billyâs yours.â

âThat DIâwhatâs her name?â

Jury cleared his throat, wondering how the name would come out. âAguilar. Islington police. The one in charge.â

Phyllis nodded, her freshly gloved hand now wandering along Billyâs chest, examining what had already been thoroughly examined. âIâve worked this job for fifteen years and still canât believe the possessiveness and preening. Youâre all like a bunch of jaded film stars.â She gave him a wicked smile. âWell, not all of you. Oh, hell.â She stripped off the second pair of gloves and dropped them in the same metal container as the first pair. âLunch?â

Â

Danny Wu was the most self-contained man Jury had ever met. Nothing rattled or ruffled him, including a body on his doorstep. To Jury, Danny wasnât a suspect, not because he wouldnât shoot a man down in the middle of Soho, but because Danny was obsessively neat and wouldnât have tolerated a mess on the sidewalk outside Ruiyi. However, who had done the murder, Danny might well know, but if it was something that related to him, heâd take care of it himself. It would turn out to have nothing at all to do with the Triad (as Racer suspected) or any gang. What Racer didnât realize was that Danny was very much his own man; he belonged to nothing except the restaurateursâ association.

Here he came now in one of his Stegna suits, dark gray wool and silk, a tie that Van Gogh might have painted (had he been into haberdashery) with its swirl of brilliant colors. Lavender shirt that he got away with, although few men could have.

âAh! Detectives and doctor!â He bowed toward Phyllis, turned back to Jury. âCan you wipe out crime in London if youâre in here noshing all the time? Not that Iâm not delighted to see you.â He snapped his fingers and one of the little, ageless ladies who served here shuffled over bearing a clay pot and little clay cups that she set before them with a smile.

âArenât you any closer to collaring my killer?â said Danny with a

smile brilliant enough for a toothpaste ad. He meant the murder of the man who had fallen in an untidy heap directly on his doorsill.

When Jury didnât answer and Wiggins didnât look up from the menu, Danny went on. âNo? Surely youâre not still deluding yourselves that I did it?â

âYouâre right; weâre not, Danny. You donât kill people in Soho. You do that over in Limehouse.â

âReally? Who do you have in mind? Or is it the entire Docklands population? I understand the suits who live in those swanky condos in Butlerâs Wharf are actually living over opium dens.â

Said Wiggins with a snigger: âNo, they probably live in the opium dens. Iâm having the crispy fish.â

âYou always have the crispy fish,â said Jury.

Wiggins looked happy, bathed in the ocher light and muted sounds of Ruiyi. It always surprised Jury that a room this crowded could be so low key. There was the inevitable queue at the door, heads cranking this way and that, looking for tables where the diners were nearly finished. âMaybe he got tired,â said Wiggins, still on the subject of the Ruiyi corpse, âof waiting for a table.â

Phyllis laughed and read the menu.

âMay I suggest todayâs special? Shrimp in garlic sauce.â

âIâm having the crispy fish,â said Wiggins again.

âYou said.â

âOr,â Danny continued, âthe Peking duck with apricots.â

âIâll have the shrimp,â said Phyllis as she poured herself a morsel of tea.

âDuck,â said Jury. He went on: âThe thing is, Danny, Iâm also pretty certain you knew our victim and even, maybe, who shot him.â

âHe was a Caucasian,â said Danny, adjusting his lavender shirt sleeve.

âAre you saying you donât know any Caucasians?â

âOnly you Scotland Yard lot.â

âYes. Sure.â Jury drank the tea that Phyllis had poured him. The cup was thimble-sized.

Danny smiled and went off to put in their order, stopping at several tables along his way.

They were all eating the glazed banana dessert when the unwelcome ring of his mobile phone made Jury cringe. âHell.â He whipped it from his pocket. âYes?â

It was Detective Inspector Aguilar.

âIâm at Dust.â She hung up.

Jury frowned and slapped the phone shut.

âTrouble?â asked Phyllis.

âSir, if you donât mind my saying,â said Wiggins, âyou really ought to change that ring over from âThree Blind Mice.ââ

Phyllis said, âOh, I donât know. I think it suits him,â and went back to cracking the thin shell of glaze with her teeth as she smiled at him.

Jury glared.

NINE

Dust in daylight was much the same as Dust at dark. Same customers, it appeared, though fewer, which didnât make it less noisy; simply more cavernous, more of an echo chamber. As he made his way to the bar, Jury felt as though he had to wave away each sound, as if they covered him like cobwebs.

She was at the bar, and Jury sat down. âYouâre here why?â

Aguilar lit a cigarette with a wafer-thin lighter that looked as if it should be in the silver vaults. She must have been getting by on more than her police pay. It was none of his business.

âIt was a gift,â she said, blowing smoke in a razor-thin stream.

Jury was sick of mind readers.

âFrom whom?â

âArenât we testy today?â she said.

âAnd tomorrow weâll be even testier.â

âAn uncle,â she said, answering his question about the lighter. âRodrigo. He lives in Buenos Aires. Filthy rich.â

âYouâre from Argentina?â

âBrazil.â

âCare to go into it?â

âNo.â She blew a smoke ring.

âNo details about your difficult childhood, your drug-hampered youth?â

She turned to look at him. âYou donât need details.â

âRight.â Jury ordered a pint of Fosterâs from the current barman. âWhy are you here?â

âInstead of Brazil?â She looked at him full face, eyebrows making their point. âHow easily you forget. This is a murder investigation and youâre helping me. Iâm talking to Ty.â

âIâm offââ He had meant to say it and couldnât. He hated her. No,

he hated himself. He hated the both of them. Neither. It was nobodyâs fault. It was simply a collision that shouldnât have occurred, but had.

âDidnât we finish with him?â *Or with us?*

The barman slid a Fosterâs to him and gave him a thumbs-up and Jury wasnât sure what the gesture implied. That heâd found this woman?

âNo, we didnât finish. The guyâs gay as a maypole.â

âSo what? That doesnât mean Billy Maples was.â

She turned her dark liquid eyes on him and Jury felt he was swimming into them. âYouâre so naive.â

Naive? Christ. âI donât know that I like you.â

âI donât know that I care.â

Ty reappeared with two magnums of champagne from some depth or other of Dust.

Aguilar glanced around. âI thought this was the cellar.â

Part of Tyâs mouth smiled; neither of his eyes did. âYou getting any leads about Billy?â He was asking Jury. Heâd apparently had enough of Lu.

But she answered anyway, âThatâs why weâre here, Ty. I told you.â

Tyâs forehead crinkled like old parchment. âI told you all I know. Look: I want to helpââ

âThen stop dicking around.â She gave him a quick false smile.

His caramel-colored skin looked soaked in ashes. âWhat are you talking about?â

Again, he addressed Jury, and again Aguilar answered.

âTy, Ty, Ty. We know all about it.â Her sigh, smooth and false, was like the smile. She pulled a tiny leather notebook from her carryall. Rather, Jury had thought it was a notebook. But on the front in Italian was the word *âIndirizzi.â* She hadnât taken any notes in it; it was an address book. He had to admit he was fascinated watching her sift through it, little page after little page, stopping to run her long finger down a blank page. âI count eight people we talked to, including Billyâs latest woman, who know you and knew Billy. So come on, Ty, chapter and verse. Iâll buy you a drink.â

He didnât capitulate to the drink, but he did to her tenacity; her heady presence could be smothering. Jury ought to know.

âListen.â Ty leaned over the bar, close in, his voice low. âIâm not a fag; neither was heââ

Aguilar, so close to Ty he must have felt breath on his face, said, âI

donât care if you took it up your arse, in your ear, or down your throat. All I want to know is what happened to Billy Maples. Thatâs all.â

His voice went up a few decibels: âWell, so do I, dammit.â

Jury thought he heard tears in Tyâs voice now.

âThen tell the damned truth!â

She should have left it at that, should have let him set the pace. But she didnât. âWas it you who had a date with him at the Zetter? You were supposed to join him for coffee and other things.â

â*No.* Okay, okay, we did have something goingâwell, thatâs not a hundred percent true; letâs say I *thought* we had something going; then he broke it off.â

âWhen? When did he tell you he was through?â

What was she doing? She was alienating him. No. She was trying to piss him off, make him thoughtless so he might give up in anger what he wouldnât under a milder form of questioning. Juryâs kind. Jury didnât believe in bullying suspects; he thought what you get, what information you pull from an unwilling witness was unreliable. Some would do or say anything to get you off their backs.

Ty said, âHe didnât exactly say that.â

âHe was here last night. He left to keep a date with someone at the Zetter where heâd booked a room. You say it wasnât you. But he told you, didnât he, that he was meeting somebody at the Zetter?â

âHe told me nothing. All he said was that heâd booked a room there; said he was tired. I thought it was bloody funny for him to be doing that considering all he had to do was fall into a cab and go back to Chelsea.â

âYou were suspicious, is that it? So you went to the Zetter later and sussed it out, is that it? We know you werenât here after nine-thirty.â

Ty looked blank.

Jury said, âInspector Aguilar.â

Not at all happy about being interrupted, she turned the intense heat of her gaze from Ty to Jury. âWhat?â

Jury motioned his head toward the door.

Less out of curiosity than of having nothing else to say to Ty, she got off the stool and drained the last of her drink. âIâll talk to you later.â

Ty started wiping down the bar.

Lu Aguilar looked at Jury, looked away.

âWe appreciate your help,â said Jury. âGood night.â

Â

âI donât have my car.â

âI have mine.â They were dodging a lorry, a Mini Cooper, and a Morris battling it out in the Clerkenwell Road. âItâs over the road in St. Jamesâs Green. Through the passageway.â

They passed the Zetter and were making their way through the dark of Jerusalem Passage, when Jury said, âYou can be damned tough, Lu.â He laughed. âIâm glad Iâm not one of your bloody suspects.â But the laughter dissolved as soon as it started. He felt a rising anger and got angrier yet because she made him feel that way. âI donât know why you thought you needed me here.â

Lu stopped suddenly, turned to face him and pushed him against the wall. âYou donât? Really?â Her mouth was near his but not on it. The words came out in hot little puffs. âYouâre pretty dim then; how did you make it to superintendent?â

âI can always make my way back down the chain.â He said this against her lips, not quite, but almost there. A breeze stirred the few leaves at their feet, the few cast-off bits of paper, and her hair, long and loose, floated up like a veil.

âWe need to discuss this, you know. At your place or mine? I told you he was lying.â

âNo, you said he was full of shit.â This was whispered with his mouth so close to hers they seemed to be breathing together, air lacking oxygen if theyâd breathed apart. He felt the same thing heâd felt when sheâd walked into Billyâs room at the Zetter.

âYour place or mine?â she whispered.

âMine,â said Jury, his hand on the back of her hair, cutting out the sliver of light, the whispering, the air. Again, he felt he was smothering.

Â

Naked, sheet pulled up to her chin, she smoked a cigarette and watched him through the scrim of smoke. âYou going somewhere?â

He had pulled on pants, vest, shirt, was sitting on the edge of the bed, starting to button the shirt. âIâve got this case, see, that occasionally demands some of my attenââ

Lu slapped his hand away from the buttons, grabbed on to the collar and pulled his face down to hers. âAt least, donât button it.â

She kissed him.

âIs this love, then? What?â

âLove? Is that what you want?â

He smiled and brought his face down to hers again. He was close enough to brush his lips across her cheek. He said, âI wantâ¦â then across the bridge of her nose, and over the other cheek, at the same time running his hand down her arm and then up to her hand. âThis!â He snatched the cigarette and stuck it in his mouth.

She swung the pillow around and hit him, laughing. âSo thatâs all I am to you! A source for all of your sinful addictions.â

âPretty much, yeah.â Cigarette still in his mouth, he rose, buttoned up his shirt. âGet up. Iâm going upstairs to check on Stone.â

âStone?â

âA dog. His ownerâs in Europe somewhere. Heâs a musician. Has a group, plays guitar. Be back in a minute.â He leaned down, kissed her, left.

Â

She was gone when he returned, leaving no trace of herself behind. Clothes on the floor, shoulder bag and shoes, her damned cigarettes had all been gathered up and gone with her. Not a trace, not a clue, that is, except the general wreckage of the flat.

Jury had to smile. The living room looked as if it had been tossed by Vice. He padded into the kitchen, filled the kettle, and set it down smartly on the burner, as if the violence that had risen in his blood after the last twenty-fourâno, not that evenâwould now be forced onto anything that happened to cross his path.

He opened the cupboard, pulled out a mug, and slammed the unprovoking cupboard door shut. He leaned his forehead against it. Then he turned his back, head in hands. *Are you fucking insane?*

For one wild second he feared the cupboard door would answer. All of the inanimate things around him seemed to be pulsing, attuned to the same current. It was as if there were a crying-to-be-used leftover violence or rage. Was this supposed to be the legacy of love? But it wasnât love. Love, he feared, wasnât big enough to hold it.

They couldnât keep this up.

He couldnât resist it.

A knock at the door yanked him away from the wall. He hoped it wasnât anyone he knew; he might just land a punch on a jaw. Quickly, he finished buttoning his shirt, and on the way to the door

set the coffee table upright again, but hadnât time to upturn the chair and end table. They werenât in the line of vision from his door, so that was all right. He opened it.

âMr. Jury.â She was wringing her hands.

It was Mrs. Wasserman, the tenant of the basement flat.

âDid you hear it?â

He arranged his face in simple greeting. âHello, Mrs. Wasserman. Hear what?â

Anxiously, she whispered, as if âitâ might hear her and knock her down. âThe awful noise last night.â As Jury stood his ground in the doorway, blocking her view, she looked upward, as though she were seeing through the second-and third-floor flats. âCould Carole-anne have had friends over?â âFriendsâ to be counted of course as one particular friend, but not by her. âA party, perhaps? It was so wild Iâd think you would have heard it.â

Jury looked at the ceiling where, in the flat above them, the dog Stoneâs nails *click click*ed as he paced. âStone?â

âA dog making that racket? Now youâre just teasing. What worries me is an intruderââ

Jury held up his hand, palm out. Heâd got it. âStanâs back.â Why did that statement sound so ridiculous? He cleared his throat. âThatâs what you heard.â

âBut I havenât seen him.â Her voice wavered, wanting it to be Stan, but still afraid it was an intruder. âOne person making such noise?â Slowly, she shook her head.

âHe had his group with him. Havenât you heard them overhead before? Theyâre a weird jazz bunch.â

Worry bit into her brow, making tiny crevices. âThatâs *music,* Mr. Jury. This wasnât music.â

âMusic? Sometimes I think when they get going they make sounds like falling furniture.â Jury laughed. *Ha Ha Ha.*

âIâll have to speak to Carole-anne.â

She wasnât giving up on the Carole-anne and her friends idea. He had to get her off that tack. If she told Carole-anne about the noise, Carole-anne would suss it out in five seconds and be livid. *Livid.* She hated the idea of Juryâs looking at other women. Livid and heartbroken, she wouldnât speak to him ever again for the rest of their natural lives together.

âListen, Mrs. Wasserman, donât say anything to Carole-anne. Let me take care of that. Iâm a detective, after all. I have ways of getting

information.â He winked. Her answering smile was small and weak. âBut Iâm sure itâs not an intruder. Probably Stan came back and he and Stone had a tussle on the floor. You know how much he loves that dog.â In the circumstances, that hadnât come out very well.

But Mrs. Wasserman seemed appeased. âWellâ¦youâre probably right, Mr. Jury. But if you see him, tell him to stop by and say hello.â

âI will.â

âSorry to bother you.â She turned toward the stairs.

âNo bother at all, Mrs. Wasserman.â

Jury turned and shut the door, congratulating himself on the way heâd handled that, including his brilliant solution, and went whistling back to the kitchen and the kettle.

On his way he looked around the living room at the overturned chair and small side table, the newspapers and magazines that had spilled from the upset coffee table and lay strewn across the rug, the rug itself scudded into little waves, pillows, booksâand why were the desk drawers pulled out of their sockets?

Are you fucking insane?

Ten

In St. Jamesâs Church, a woman was arranging flowers, pink peonies and blue hydrangeas, in a large vase near the altar. He walked down the nave to where she stood, holding a peony as if debating where to put it. âVery pretty,â he said, not knowing why he was commenting and startling her in the bargain.

âOh!â

âSorry, I was looking for whoeverâs in charge. Actually, I donât know this priest, butââ He described the man who had bumped into him last night. âFairly young, a little shorter than I, maybe six feet. In his thirties, perhaps?â

She laughed. âOh, no. I think what youâd be wanting isnât St. Jamesâs. Itâs Our Most Holy Redeemer. But I donât know the name of the priest there. I think the present one might be there just temporarily. Anyway, you want to go to Exmouth Market.â

âIâm not sure where that is.â

âYou just go back out to Clerkenwell Close, youâll pass Northampton Road, then round to Exmouth Market. Itâs a lively place. You canât miss it.â

Jury thanked her and left.

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Exmouth Market was a sudden eruption of restaurants and coffeehouses and cafÃ©s that probably hadnât been there yesterday. Another trendy little area.

The Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer was located among these bristling little businesses. It was surprising in its architecture, more in the Italian Renaissance style. Or so he guessed from its gabled front, reminiscent of a basilicaâs. At least he thought so, knowing little about architecture, especially church architecture.

Inside, it was even more Italianate. Above him was a lovely vaulted ceiling that featured in one of the many cards and pictures Marshall Trueblood had brought back from Florence. It would be no use asking Melrose Plant; all he brought back were gloves. His only interest appeared to be the glove store. Jury kept his eyes trained upward. Who was the famous, very famous, dome builder?

âBrunelleschi,â said a mind reader at his elbow.

Jury whipped around and looked into the face of the man who had passed him in Jerusalem Passage. He had seen him only in half light and for only a couple of seconds, but he was the man who had run into Phyllis the night before.

âOh. Brunelleschiâs dome; now I remember.â

âThis church is modeled on Santo Spirito. Florence. Have you been there?â

Jury smiled. âNo. Friends have.â

The priest looked up. âItâs a copy. Or rather I should say itâs based on that ceiling.â

âIs Holy Redeemer your church, then?â

âMine? Oh, no. Iâm more or less pinch-hitting for a few months.â

He seemed quite young. But Jury thought that might simply be the agelessness of faith or, possibly, art. Of where they stood, both looking up at the Brunelleschi-inspired ceiling. Jury found himself suddenly very tired. The deep restfulness of the church seemed to enrobe him. The air seemed to be thinning.

âI havenât seen you in here before,â said the priest. âYouâre visiting? Traveling?â

Jury smiled at that. âI wish I were. No, I live in Islington.â

âIâm Father Martin. I get the impression youâre here for something other than our ceiling.â

âYou donât remember me, do you?â

The priest cocked his head. âNo. Weâve met?â

Jury realized he hadnât produced his ID and fished it out. âSorry. Iâm from New Scotland Yard.â

Father Martin looked astonished, as if he wondered what old crime had caught up with him.

âWe havenât really met. You bumped into us last night near the Zetter. That narrow passageâ?â

âOf course. I think you were with someoneâ¦a woman. Iâm sorry. But then I donât expect you came here for an apology.â

âRight. You probably know thereâs been a man murdered at the

Zetter. That sort of news travels fast.â

Father Martinâs expression underwent a series of changes, none of them happy, yet none of them as unhappy as the man last night had worn. âYes, I did hear about it.â

âHis name isâwasâBilly Maples. Do you know anything about him?â

The priest studied Juryâs face closely enough to make him uncomfortable. *Probably sees right through me.*

âIâm not sure, Superintendent. Let me think about it a bit.â

He knew him, thought Jury, but he wasnât going to press him.

âOf course. Iâll be back. Thank you, Father. In the meantime if you hear anything at all that might be relevant, get in touch right away, will you?â Jury handed him a card.

âYes, of course,â said the priest, looking at it. âI will.â

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âYouâll find him in the kitchen,â said the clerk or concierge, he couldnât be sure which, in answer to Juryâs request to see Gilbert Snow.

Jury said, âIâd rather not go looking for him in the kitchen; Iâd much prefer he come out here. Or perhapsââJury looked toward the dining roomâââin there?â

She tossed her long hair back from her face, called the kitchen, said to Jury that Gilbert Snow would be right out. She nodded toward an area behind Jury. âWhy donât you wait in the bar? Itâs quite comfortable.â She motioned toward an area raised a little above the lobby.

Jury sat down on a well-cushioned couch, thought about getting some water. There was a sort of window that joined the bar and the dining room. He could see waiters and waitresses going about the tables.

Gilbert Snow was prompt in coming. Jury stood up and shook his hand, then asked him to sit down.

Jury said, âYouâve been working here for a while, have you?â

âYes, sir. Been here since it opened. That werenât long ago. Itâs quite new. I was one oâ the first to be taken on.â

âBefore that, had you been in hotel work?â

âOh no, sir, no. I was one oâ them worked the barges from the Isle oâ Dogs down to Gravesend. Then all this buildinâ started up, with all them warehouses turned into flats, or lofts, I believe thatâs what they

call âem. Bit fancy. I mean, the Isle oâ Dogs, itâs but a bedroom community now. Clerkenwell, you remember what Clerkenwell was? Itâs not been but a few years; itâs not decades weâre talkinâ about, no sir, just a matter of a few years.â Gilbert leaned closer, elbow on the little table, as if about to impart confidences. âSoon itâll be Spitalfields thatâll go the way of Covent Garden. I mean London was goinâ along fine in its old ways, then people decide they got to have their lofts and garages and water views.â He flapped his hand in dismissal of Thames views. âI used to like us, I did. I liked how we could do with less. Not like America. Can you imagine an American doinâ without her dishwasher? Sheâd be sunk.â

Jury said, âThereâs a lot of America that does make do with less, a lot less. We donât hear about it, though. The old coal-mining towns stripped bare. The Appalachians, parts of the Midwest. You know what I think is wrong with America?â

âNo, sir, I donât.â

âItâs just too big. Itâs too bloody big.â

Gilbert nodded. âI think you just might be right, there, I do indeed. Itâs so big not even half of it knows whatâs going on in the other half.â

Jury nodded and said, âTo go back to Mr. Maples. Had you ever seen him before?â

âOnce when he was a guest here before.â

âSo you recognized him?â

Gilbert frowned. âHe was out on the patio when I brought the supper up and he came into the room to sign the check and add on to the gratuity. Very generous person.â

âSo youâre sure it was Maples.â

âWell, yes, of course. Itâd be pretty crazy to think someone else comes in and shoots him, then orders dinner and pretends to be him and then just leaves? Thatâd be a peculiar thing to do.â

Jury smiled. âYouâd be surprised what these villains can get up to.â

Gilbert shook his head. âWell, thatâs your job, then, sir. I wouldnât fancy it myself.â

Jury smiled. âYes, thatâs my job, unfortunately.â

ELEVEN

Waterloo Bridge lay under a dense fog when Jury parked his car on the Victoria Embankment an hour later. It was one of those pea soupers people liked to talk about, back when they called London the Smoke.

The area beneath the bridge was used as a sort of encampment and shelter for a dozen or so of the ill-fated men and women who, during the day, begged for their supper or investigated dustbins.

They all knew one another from camping here over a long period of time. They were by way of being mates, a family almost. Seldom were they all here at any one time during the night; usually it was only four or six of them.

Jury thought it was remarkable the way the police turned a blind eye to these lodging arrangements, but they did, as long as the group was goneâand their chattels with themâduring the day. At night, they were left alone, out of sight, out of mind.

Benny Keegan was one of them.

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âWot? Youâve come again?â said Mags, then sang, âLookinâ better than anyone has a right toââ

Jury laughed. It wouldâve sounded like that Dolly Parton favorite had there been any possibility of mistaking Mags for Dolly. Mags sat in a huddle of shawls and scarves, looking up at Jury.

She went on: âThatâs like târee times in the last mumph you been here. Things must be tough if they let you lot off to cruise under the bridges. Whatâs a matter? You ainât meetinâ yer quota so you gotta come here and shake down us law-abidinâ citizens?â

âDonât be so hard on the Filth, Mags. Itâs them that let you doss down here. Whereâs Benny?â

Serious now, she lowered her voice. âThat was turâble, wot happened. And our Benny beinâ tâone to find the body!â

Jury had picked up a magazine from one of the piles around her. That was how sheâd gotten her nickname. âSo where is he?â

âProbâly along thereââ She raised an arm and pointed down the length of the Embankment.

A fire was going strong in an oil drum, blazing up in the hollow-cheekboned face of a tall man in a long dark coat whom they called the sergeant. He had put himself in charge of keeping the place drug free, though not, of course, drink free, which would be expecting entirely too much. He liked his nip now and then. He had also taken on the responsibility of seeing that the others cleared out during the day.

âYou can âave that one.â She nodded at the ancient copy of *Playboy*. âLook like you could use it, you not âavinâ anything like a love life.â

âIâve got you, Mags.â

âYou got that centerfold is wot you got.â

âBetter than nothing.â

âBetterân somfing, ya mean. Just look at the size of âer!â

âMr. Jury!â he heard Benny call, followed by a bark. Sparky.

âHullo, Benny. I need to talk to you. âlo, Sparky.â Jury knelt to give Sparky a good head rub. The rougher, the better Sparky liked it.

The three went over to sit on the stone steps that led from the Embankment down to the river.

Benny asked with some anxiety, âDo I have to go down the nick and talk to some yob?â

âJust this yob at the moment.â

Sparky sat at their feet, looking from one to the other, reminding Jury of Harry Johnsonâs dog, Mungo. How is it that he knew what were probably the three smartest dogs in LondonâSparky, Mungo, and Stone? How often did he think of getting one for himself?

âIâm just wondering if youâve remembered anything else about the crime scene.â Jury imagined Benny would like it thus referred to.

âI been thinkinâ on it and canât come up with nothing, Mr. Jury. There mustâve been somebody else there.â

âAnd it was somebody he knew.â

Benny nodded and leaned back on his elbows. âBut Gil, now, he didnât see anybody else when he took up the dinner, or heâdâve said.â

âThis mystery person mightnât have arrived yet, or if he was there, heââ

âOr she, donât forget.â

âYouâre right. Or *she* could have gone out on the patio.â

âThatâs where Gil said Billy Maples was when he took up the dinner. Supposing it could of been somebody elseâthe killer? And maybe he was still there?â

âI donât see how he could have been. You were in the room and out on the patio yourself. He couldnât have been in the bathroom, either, as you put Sparky in there.â

Benny hadnât, as one of the room service staff might have, given a yell and run for it. Benny had instead shown quite a bit of self-command, in addition to curiosity, and had examined the body and the room. He only hoped the boy hadnât shown more interest in it than was good for him.

âHave you noticed anybody hanging about, Benny?â

âHanginâ about? No. Whatâdâya mean?â

âNothing, really.â

Benny pulled a battered chew toy from his pocket and offered it to Sparky, who looked at it and let it lie. It was as if Sparky knew there were graver issues at hand and he wasnât to be diverted by anything as trivial as a toy. Sparky even took a step backward to put a distance between himself and the worn twist of rope.

Jury looked at him and said, âYou want to quit your Southwark gig and work for the Yard?â

Even in the dark, Jury could sense the blush.

âAh, go on, Mr. Jury.â

TWELVE

As Jury remembered it, the garden was walled and very quiet. Very private.

He sat by a window on the 9:18 train to Rye, watching a line of oasthouses as the train trundled through the Kent countryside. He was thinking about Lamb House.

Across from him sat a boy of ten or eleven, reading something difficult, to judge from the deep frown. Jury could not see the title of the book, a textbook, perhaps, as it had no dust jacket. Why were all textbooks so lacking in verve and color? The boy looked up from the book and the frown disappeared, replaced by a smile, as if he recognized that this man sitting across from him had once had to deal with lusterless books, too.

He reminded Jury of someone. A face not unhandsome, clear pale eyes and skin. Chestnut brown hair. Himself. They had lived here, in Kent or Sussex, after his mum had died. He had come to live with his uncle and aunt and that single cousin, his old childhood nemesis who had died so recently. Sarah had died in March.

The train pulled into the station. Both he and the boy rose and left.

Rye sat along that line of coast that supported Brighton and Hastings to the west and Dover to the east. Rye had been part of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports, but was no more. Instead of the water eroding the land, it had pulled back from it, leaving an expanse of sand and mud and shale. The town itself was known to be one of the most charming of English villages: cobblestones, tight little houses, the famous Mermaid Street and tavern that had been the haunt of pirates.

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Lamb House sat at the end of one of these narrow cobbled streets, a

modest brick establishment that gave no clue as to the beautiful garden behind it, nor of one of the writers who had lived here.

A plump and pleasant woman answered the door and admitted him. Housekeeper, probably. She showed him into a sitting room and excused herself, saying that Mr. Brunner was on the phone and would be along in a minute or two.

When sheâd left, Jury wandered into the dining room, where windows gave out onto the garden he remembered. He turned back to the bookâno, journalâon the dining room table, opened to a page so the James pilgrim could read it. Jury did so. What astonished him in this writing was the lack of corrections; James wrote with the same exacting use of language, the same tone, the same nuance as in his finished books. Only here and there was a word or phrase excised and replaced by another. What might have served as a first draft for James, a lesser writer would be happy to call the final copy.

The man who walked in as he was reading was tall and light haired and good-looking with a square jaw and a slender nose. Although he was probably in his fifties, he looked a decade younger.

Jury extended his hand. âRichard Jury. We spoke on the telephone?â

âKurt Brunner. Youâre here about Billy.â The voice seemed to pitch into a different register, as if they were on a ship blasted by a wave.

âIâm sorry, Mr. Brunner.â

He recovered himself and led Jury back to the sitting room. It was quite attractive in its unlived-in way. But Lamb House was, after all, a little museum of sorts, or at least its ground floor was. The tenant would be responsible for keeping it spotless and prepared for visitors for a good part of the year. The sign outside had given Wednesdays and Saturdays as the public days.

And this room, certainly, was meticulously cared for: the books on those shelves lovingly dusted, the brilliants of that candlestick holder on the mantel carefully polished. The crystal was touched by the darting, uncertain sunlight that came and went as the two of them sat there in what seemed more than silence, a hush.

âIâm sorry about Billy Maples. And Iâm sorry youâre being bothered again by police. I was asked to help out on the case since I knew one of the witnesses and also a family member.â Jury paused. âYou were with Billy for several years, I understand.â

âI was, yes.â Brunner looked away, looked off toward the window

through which light came and went swiftly. âFor about five years. In London and also here.â

There was no question about the effect of Billy Maplesâs death on Kurt Brunner. The man looked and sounded desolate. But he kept it up. There was little left of a German accent and none of the idiom; perhaps heâd consciously tried to drill them out of his speech.

âYou werenât at the family estate, then?â

Brunner shook his head. âBilly didnât care for the house.â

âYet he had grown up there. It was his childhood home.â

âYes, but he didnât get on very well with his family. He didnât like the place. I think perhaps it was why heâd have such mood swings.â He frowned slightly.

Jury thought about this. âBut you canât really say?â

Brunner shook his head.

Jury said, âWhat were your duties? I mean, in what capacity did you work for him?â

âHe wanted, for lack of a better term, an administrative assistant; he needed someone to keep things sorted.â

ââThingsâ?â

âHe had many interests. Sometimes theyâd conflict. Iâm speaking on a very simple level hereâI mean conflicts of time or meetings.â

Jury thought about this, then said, âFrom what Iâve heard, your employer was very generous. Where did that come from?â

Kurt Brunnerâs eyebrows rose, puzzled. âIâm not sure what you mean, Superintendent.â

âIâm not quite sure either. He made hefty contributions to this gallery in Clerkenwell, and gave a good deal of money to artists. And then thereâs thisââJury looked up at the ceilingâât*his* literary landscape. Not just any writer, but Henry James, no less.â Jury frowned, thinking. âI havenât read much, but thereâs something about his writing thatâs soâ¦hermetic. If that makes any sense.â

âJames had a very active social life. Traveled widely. Was a worldly man. He wasnât a recluse, if thatâs what you mean.â

âSo Iâve heard, butâ¦canât you do all that and still remain, well, *sealed*?â

Brunnerâs expression became serious. âYou think Billy lived that sort of life?â

âI donât know; Iâm merely tossing it out.â Jury thought of Father Martin and Our Most Holy Redeemer Church. âWas he of a religious bent? Perhaps heâd been saved.â

Kurt Brunner just looked at him. âFrom what?â

âI wouldnât know, would I?â Jury smiled. âI expect from his formerly wastrel ways.â Jury thought somehow he might have offended Kurt Brunner. He wanted to revive Brunnerâs earlier mood and brought the subject down to a more literal level. âYou handled his finances and kept his calendar and were his friend?â

âI like to think so, I mean, that I was his friend.â

âYou must have given his murder a lot of thought.â

Brunner nodded. âI certainly have. And Iâve no idea why it happened.â

âDid he have enemies?â

âEnemies.â Brunner frowned, as if the word had little connection with his dead friend. âNone I knew of.â

Jury leaned his head in the palm of his hand, elbow braced on the arm of his chair. Prepared to be patient. âYou must have tried to sort it outâwhat caused someone to shoot Billy Maples.â

Kurt Brunner leaned toward Jury. âAs I said before, yes. Yes, I have. Iâve thought of little else, Superintendent.â

âIâm sure. But this is what I mean. You must have thought of certain possibilitiesâpeople, places, situationsâbefore discarding them. I expect thatâs what Iâm looking for: the discards.â

âThat would be irresponsible of me, wouldnât it? Merely to toss out names like bread to a swan?â

Jury grinned. âFirst time Iâve been likened to a swan. Letâs call it more free association than accusation or irresponsibility on your part. Iâm merely trying to put together a picture of your employer, what he was really like. Who better to come to than you?â

âBut look: Iâm betraying no confidences.â

Jury sighed. Still, he was happy to hear there were things to betray.

Brunner grew thoughtful but said nothing.

Neither did Jury. He sat, patient as a hawk. He had all day, all evening, if it came to it. While he waited he thought about Henry James. That notebook, the pages with so few alterations. To get it so right the first time around. What genius always to have access to such elegant language, such perfect prose. It was genius enough that he wound up with it in the bookâs final form. But to begin with it, to dictate it! No wonder they called him the Master.

As if coming in on his wavelength, Brunner said, âHave you read many of Jamesâs novels?â He had moved toward one of the

bookcases.

Jury shook his head. âThree, I think.â

âThis one makes use of the vampire theme.â Brunner held up a slender volume.

Jury couldnât help itâhe laughed. âHenry James writing about vampires?â

Brunner fixed him with a quirky smile. âIt depends on how you interpret them.â He sat down again.

âVampires.â

Brunner nodded, the slightly deprecating smile in place.

Jury understood the smile: living here as he did, Brunner might feel he had access to the mind of Henry James. But Jury wanted access to the mind of Billy Maples. Perhaps Brunner meant to suggest that the one was the other. âVampires. I find that really hard to believe.â

Brunner hitched his chair a bit closer. He was a man of great intensity, realized Jury. â*The Sacred Fount* isnât one of his most popular novels, perhaps because itâs rather obscure.â

âAll of James is âobscureâ from my point of view. But then Iâve not read that much.â

âOh, but *The Sacred Fount* is even more so.â Kurt Brunner smiled and reached for a silver cigarette box, took a cigarette from it, offered the box to Jury, who shook his head. Brunner went on: âI donât ordinarily smoke in here. Could we go into the garden?â

They rose and passed out through the French doors into the walled garden. It was just as Jury remembered it. How strange, he thought, that something as inconsequential as another manâs garden would stick with him for so long.

Brunner lit his cigarette. Jury watched the matchâits strike, its small bloom of flame, its progress to the tip of the cigarette. It was rather excruciating. He coughed.

âSorry. Does the smoke bother you?â

âNo, no. You were talking about this vampire business.â

âYes. In the book an older wife has drained her younger husband of his youth, or a large measure of it. One of the partners flourishes as the other one sickens.â

âAnd thatâs the vampire theme?â

âThatâs the vampire theme.â

Jury shook his head, smiled. âI have a hard time imagining James writing about it.â

âHe wrote *The Turn of the Screw,* remember.â

âYes. Thatâs one of the ones I read. How does this pertain to Billy Maples?â

âHis stepmother, Olivia. They didnât get on. Thatâs putting it mildly. They had terrible arguments. He hated going there. Heâd always swear never again. But Olivia claimed to need him, to miss him and would set about manipulating him to come back. He would go for a few days. It would take him a day to recover. âI donât know what it is,â heâd say. âShe grows more brilliant, even younger, when Iâm there, but me, Iâm completely done in, feel ten years older. Fagged.â Well, itâs as if one of them had to pay the price for the other.â

âUtterly ghoulish.â Jury thought how banal that remark was. âAre you suggesting that his stepmother is in some way responsible for Billyâs death?â

Kurl Brunner shrugged. âYouâre forgetting what it is you asked for: any person that came to mind on my way to âI have no idea who did it.â You were looking for the discards is how you put it.â

Jury shook his head. âThis woman doesnât sound as if she can be so easily discarded.â

Brunner nodded. âI agree. But Iâd have no idea at all as to how she might have been involved. I donât know how to answer your question.â

âA detective named Chilten has spoken to the parents. Heâll want to know where they were two nights ago.â

âWell, you see, âtheyâ probably donât come into it much. Billyâs father, from what I can gather, is fond of his son, but not very able to show it.â

âAnd you? Where were you?â

âIn London, at the flat in Sloane Street. Iâd just come back from Berlin. So, no, I donât have an alibi.â Brunner smiled uncertainly.

âDo you own a gun?â

Brunner shook his head. âThey asked me that, too, the detectives from, where? Islington police station? Indeed they asked me a lot of things.â

Jury opened his mouth to speak when the phone rang. Brunner excused himself, put out his cigarette. Wanting to spend more time in the house, Jury followed him inside.

While Brunner was engaged with the call, Jury moved about the sitting room, grateful for the silence. Not that heâd minded the talk,

or Brunnerâs voice, for none of that had disturbed it. Their voices had intruded upon the mood of the house about as much as a layer of dust. There was no dust, of course. The place had to be kept up. For some peculiar reason, Jury would have liked to turn a book spine toward him and blow dust from its surface. He did not know why he felt this; perhaps it had to do with letting things lie.

He picked up a book of short stories, looked at the contents page and found the story Oswald Maples had mentioned: âThe Figure in the Carpet.â

He held on to it as he looked over the shelves of books and wondered if they had been Billy Maplesâs or the property of the National Trust. Probably the Trustâs.

For some reason, he was reminded of his dead cousin and how she had given him a version of his childhood that he remembered completely differently. He had been five or sixâor so he thoughtâwhen his mother had been killed in the air raid.

âNo, you were only a baby, and, no, you werenât there when it happened,â sheâd said.

It had been highly charged, that apparently mistaken memory of his dead mother in the ruins of their house, and unless his cousin had been lying (âshe would, you know,â her husband, Brendan, had said, with a laugh), he had got it all wrong. But the feelings of desolation and devastation, that he had got right.

Kurt Brunner returned with the information that it had been the National Trust thatâd called. âThey need a tenant; they want me to stay on for two or three weeks until the couple who are to take up the tenancy, who were in line for it, can make their plans and get themselves sorted.â

âWell, at least it means you wonât have to reorganize your own for a while.â

âOh, *I* donât want it!â

âThe tenancy? But I should think you wouldnât want to be cut free straightaway,â said Jury, surprised.

âThatâs just what I *do* want. To be cut free. Itâs no work, really. If there was a salary attached, Iâd call it a sinecure.â He smiled. âAnd there are not that many visitors.â

âIt doesnât attract the masses, does it?â

âMore than youâd think, but fewer than James deserves.â Brunner smiled. âItâs too isolated for anyone other than those who absolutely want to see it.â

Idly, Jury turned the thin pages of the book of short stories he held. âIt would be treated with a kind of, well, reverence, Iâd think.â

Brunner folded his arms across his chest. âYes, we all pretty much hold our breath here.â

Jury smiled. It was a good way of putting it. He thought of the undisturbed dust and his wish to blow it away.

âSo, they look to me to find someone else; itâs as if Iâd betrayed them by turning down their offer. Almost as if Billy had betrayed them by getting himself killed.â

âWhat will you do, then?â

âGo back to London. Stay in the flat. I think I need a large dose of London life at this point. Rye can be claustrophobic.â He took out a card and made a note. âHereâs the address and telephone in case you need to get in touch with me.â

âThank you.â He didnât bother telling Kurt Brunner that police had already been to the flat. Glancing at the book in his hands, Jury said, âI donât imagine one is permitted to borrow books? Iâd like to read one or two of these.â

âOh, take it, by all means. Itâs actually mine.â

âThanks. Iâll get it back to you. When do you leave?â

âIn two or three days, I expect.â

âSo Billyâs housekeeperâsheâll need to find other work?â

âMrs. Jessup? Sheâs the cook. If the new tenant is willing to employ her, then sheâd stay.â With an unconvincing try at jocularity, Brunner said, âI donât expect you know anyone who enjoys a crabbed and hermitlike life? Some James fanatic or other?â

Jury slipped the card into his wallet. âI certainly know someone who leads a crabbed life. As far as Henry James is concerned, I believe he holds contests.â

âContests?â Brunner was puzzled.

âSomething like that.â Jury held out his hand. âGood-bye, Mr. Brunner, and thanks very much.â

Â

He walked to the station in the rain, wondering if other writersâ houses left one feeling this way. He felt drenched, not by the rain, which was light and fitful, but by Henry James, as the train sailed through Kent and passed another line of oasthouses.

He spent the journey reading âThe Figure in the Carpet.â It made him wonder about Billy Maples, but he couldnât work out why it did.

It was that feeling that had overtaken him in Lamb House. Perhaps it was Billyâs protean nature that prompted this feeling. Generous to a fault, apparently. A Londoner, and young, and yet he settles in a small village and takes on the tenancy of Lamb House, the tenancy of which includes the maintenance of the house and short tours for visitors.

Jury pulled out his small notebook and some coins when he saw the tea trolley rolling up the aisle. He handed over a five-pound note for a cup of tea and a Cadbury biscuit and told the attendant to keep the change. After the server had given Jury profuse thanks, the trolley rolled on.

What had been the attraction of Lamb House? To saddle oneâs self with the job of conducting visitors through its rooms surely bespeaks a commitment to booksâand to this manâs books.

Why had Billy gone to the hotel in Clerkenwell? Why had he gone to Our Most Holy Redeemer? Why to Dust?

Dust.

The movement of the train lulled him into a doze. He dreamed about blood snaking down the aisle of his car, and the friendly tea-trolley attendant morphing into Dracula.

THIRTEEN

âDid he tell you anything helpful?â asked Ron Chilten on the phone when Jury told him about that dayâs trip to Rye.

âHe did. Have the parents identified Billy Maplesâs body yet?â

âThe father did. He took it hard. I didnât want to ask him a lot of questions right then, so I drove to Sussex and put the questions there. Mumâs actually stepmum, a looker, but a bit of an iceberg. All I got out of them was they couldnât imagine Billy being involved with anyone whoâd do him this harm.â

Jury turned at the sound of a thud against his door. âHold on while I get the door, Ronââ

It was Stone, Stan Keelerâs dog. Jury looked up the staircase and called to Carole-anne. No Carole-anne. He wondered how Stone had gotten out of Keelerâs flat.

Stone, possibly the calmest and most self-contained dog Jury had ever knownâexcept for Harry Johnsonâs Mungoâwalked in and quietly settled himself by Juryâs chair. Jury plucked a fake bone from under the sofa table and tossed it to Stone, who caught it in his teeth. âGood move,â said Jury.

âWhy? Whatâd Iââ

âNot you, Ron. I was going to say that Billy Maples wasnât your stereotypical playboy. Not with his taking up the tenancy of Lamb House.â

âYeah, thatâs pretty much the picture I got from Malcolm.â

Jury waited. No enlightenment. âWho is Malcolm?â

âOh, I didnât say? Heâs a nephew of Roderickâs. Heâs a little villain, Malcolm is. Heâs the kind that ties firecrackers to a dogâs tail.â

âHeâs a kid?â

âWell, yes. You think Roderick was doing it?â

âRoderick?â

âYou know, the father.â

âSo is your best source of information a kid?â

âNot really. His specialty is climbing brick walls. Like the one behind the house. Donât ask me. Heâs probably ten but he says heâs twelve. He lies a lot.â

âJust what we need in an informant.â

âHell, thereâs your Benny Keegan. Heâs thirteen but you seem to think heâs a font of information.â

Jury thought of *The Sacred Fount.* He wondered about this vampire theme. âBenny doesnât tie stuff to his dogâs tail. Bennyâs very grown-up. Does this Malcolm live with the Maples family full time?â

âYeah. If he could, heâd have Roderick tied to a chair while he built a fire under it. Last I saw of Malcolm he was in the garden rappelling a brick wall with Waldo at the other end of the rope. Kind of hanging there.â

âWaldo?â

âThatâs the one. At the end of the rope.â

âRon, who is Waldo?â

âThe dog. The cook finally came out and put a stop to it. Iâll say this, though. Malcolm knows something, but heâs not giving it up.â Ron heaved a tired sigh. âIâm not a bloody inch closer to solving this.â

âIt happened only two nights ago, Ron.â

âYou know as well as I do, itâs the first twenty-four that are crucial. Thereâs no will, incidentally. Lu talked to the solicitor the familyâs been using for years.â

âThatâs too bad. He died intestate.â

âYeah, a mess, but it pretty much removes money as a motive, except maybe the parents, and they seem to have plenty as it is. Have you talked to young Benny since?â

âYes, last night.â

âYou know where he lives? I couldnât pry it out of him. I was getting ready to have him up on obstruction of justice.â

Jury laughed. âYes, I know where he lives. No, Iâm not telling.â

FOURTEEN

âNo,â said Melrose Plant.

âOh, come on. Itâs right up your street. Youâre titled and bored.â

âActually, Iâm neither. I sent my title to the moonâas you well knowâand how can I be bored with you there hatching plots that only a nutter would involve himself in?â

âWell, you do involve yourself. You went along with Niels Bohr. Like, what are you doing right this minute?â

âLike, Iâm reading.â

Jury heard on his end of the phone a rather artificial crackling of paper. âWhat?â

There was a brief silence. *âHermit News.â*

Jury stopped doodling dogs. âI beg your pardon?â

âHermit News.â

Jury waited. It was like talking to Chilten. âDo you think you could fill me in on that?â

âOn what?â

âIâm going to leap through this receiver and kill you.â

Melrose sighed. âItâs Mr. Blodgettâs small newspaper. I got him a subscription.â

Jury waited. Nothing. âYouâre probably lying since I can no more believe thereâs a *Hermit News* any more than I could *Love Nest in the CID.* But just to give you the benefit of the doubt, Iâm asking, why would hermits want a newspaper? I mean, doesnât that somehow go against the very *essence* of hermithood? I mean, if theyâre reading newspapers why not just go for *The Times*?â

There was a brief (and refreshing) silence as Melrose yawned. âBecause it doesnât have this hermit news in it.â

âDid you know Henry James had a vampire theme?â

âHad a vampire?â

âNot *had* a vampire, a vampire *theme.* Havenât you read *The Sacred Fount*?â

âNo.â

âWell, read it before you go there.â

âIâm not going there. Hereâs an interesting little column on the rise of goat farming around Northampton.â

âIâve never seen a goat in Northampton.â

âNot in. I said around.â

âIn or around, Iâve never seen one.â

âYou most certainly have.â

Jury was doodling on a pad he kept by the phone in his flat for apparently that purpose, as he never wrote anything on it. âOh, you mean your goat.â

âWell, donât sound so dismissive. Heâs a *goat* after all.â

âAstound.â

âNo, his nameâs Aghast. The horse is Aggrieved.â

Jury drew horns on the goat heâd just made. âGod, I hope you donât get a bunch of chickens. Iâd be hearing names like Annoyed, Announced, Anesthetizedââ

âOh, please. Whoâd ever name a chicken Anesthetized?â

âIâm talking to him.â Jury frowned. âLetâs get back to Lamb House. Youâd have your own cookââprobably a lieââand butler, too.â A definite lie.

âIâve already got my own cook and butler. And hermit, donât forget. I bet thereâs no hermit there.â

Jury balled up the notepaper and aimed it toward the wastebasket. âYou can be your own hermit. Lamb House strikes me as a bit of a hermitage.â

âGood, then I can install Mr. Blodgett.â

âMr. Blodgett. Heâd make a great installation at the Tate Modern.â Mr. Blodgett was the elderly man Melrose had taken on as hermit. He was disheveled and wild-looking, although in truth a mild and sweet-dispositioned man. His main purpose was to keep Melroseâs aunt away from Ardry End. His success in this quarter had been spotty. But that was no surprise.

âAnyway,â said Melrose. âWhatâs the point?â

âOf what?â

âMy God! You canât even keep your mind on your own idea!â

âOh, yes. The point is youâd find things out.â Jury was doodling a hermit.

âWhat things?â

âI donât know, do I? Thatâs why I want you there.â

A huge sigh. âThis is the Met? The Old Bill? The rozzers?â

âThe Filth.â

âThe Filth. Wotâs protectinâ us from crime and chaos? No wonder youâre the darling of Internal Affairs. You can be as vague as fog.â

âOh, they donât mind me anymore. Anyway, Iâll have to be pushing off one of these years. Mandatory retirement, you know. Iâve never understood that rule. Cutting us off when weâre at peak performance.â

Melrose feigned uproarious laughter.

âSo that means youâll do it.â Jury stuck a pole in his hermitâs hand and hung up.

FIFTEEN

Church doors always seemed to thud instead of simply closing.

Jury rarely heard the thud, as he so rarely visited churches.

When he did, he preferred a country church, usually empty and giving the impression of sanctuary. Churches were no more sanctuaries than pubs or train stations. They were simply quieter.

He had walked around the row of pews on the left side and was standing looking into the little lady chapel, with its statue of Mary. These chapels always seemed even quieter than the rest of the church. He wondered if silence gathered in some places: a wood in deep winter; a dock where a boat moored in still water; an abandoned farmhouse.

The world at large was against silence, which made it all the more restful and the more necessary when one came upon it. He stood looking at Mary and thinking of the priest. Father Martin, he bet, had been with someone he shouldnât have, or in some place he shouldnât have been. But that this had anything to do with the murder was doubtful. There was no reason to connect the two, except via the most tenuous connection with Billy Maples. Nothing.

He could not say how long heâd been standing there, looking at the figure of Mary, when the voice behind him made him flinch.

âSuperintendent.â

Jury turned, smiled at Father Martin, who did indeed look good. But Jury supposed if he himself put on those black clothes and bright white collar, heâd look good, too. Spirituality clung to those clothes. Why did he doubt what the man hadâor hadnâtâtold him?

âFather Martin,â said Jury. Turning away from the chapel, he felt the emptiness, felt the sheer, unstoppable fall from some dizzying height.

âShall we sit down for a moment?â Father Martin took one of the

little chairs in the chapel and motioned for Jury to do the same. âHow is your investigation going?â

âNot speedily. I can say that.â

âBut it only happenedâwhat? Two days ago,â said the priest.

âIn that amount of time, God had nearly half the world up and running.â

Father Martin laughed. It rang out in an astonishing way; the acoustics here must have been hellishly good. Heâd like to hear the choir.

âSo,â said Jury, âall that tells me is Iâm not God.â

âBut he doesnât have your forensic people, either.â

âHe doesnât need them.â

Father Martin smiled and asked, âHow can I help?â

âIf you remember, you said youâd think for a bit about Billy Maples. Did you?â

Right now, the priest looked like one of those handsome, pale lads one sees walking with others in the grounds of a prep or public school, on their way to morning prayers or evening chapel, talking or even larking about. Right now, in the flicker of candlelight, this boyâs face was full of shadows.

Father Martin sat back. âI saw him two or three times. The first was during an evening service. The next time was for confession. This was the reason I told you I needed to think about it, you see.â

Jury didnât. âYou mean in the confessional?â

The priest nodded. âHe came into the church. When I came through from the sacristy he was sitting in one of the pews up front. He came up to me and asked if Iâd hear his confession. It wasnât the hour for confession, but he seemed distraught, so I agreed, of course.â

Jury waited. âAnd youâre going to say you cannot divulge the contents.â

A slight smile. âI expect so.â

âDespite his having been murdered.â

Father Martin looked at the floor. âEven so, I canât see what possible connection there could be between that and what he said in confession.â

Surely, the man was not that stupid or disingenuous. âYouâre not supposed to see it, Father. I am. I get paid to see it.â *Even if I donât know what âitâ is.* He thought again of Oswaldâs talking about Jamesâs figure in the carpet. âAnd that still doesnât explain why you didnât tell me this yesterday, when we first spoke.â

âIâm sorry. I didnât tell you becauseââ

He was thinking again. Witnesses who told the truth didnât have to think about it, normally.

âBecause, since I knew I wouldnât be telling you what heâwhat Billyâsaid in the confessional, I didnât see how it would help you at all to knowââthe priest shruggedââthat heâd said it in the confessional.â

âYou know perfectly well it could make a difference, Father. A man is murdered in a hotel not far from here, a man who felt a need to confess. Dot, dot, dot. Now try and connect those dots, will you? Murder, dot; confession, dot dot; murder related to what was confessed, dot dot dot.â

âIâm sorry. But if I told you nothing was said during that confession that would have anything to do with your investigation?â

âIâd say you donât know what youâre talking about.â

Father Martin was silent.

âTell me about his state of mind.â

âUnhappy, certainly.â

âI was told Billy had dramatic mood swings, perhaps what we used to call manic depression.â

âItâs possible. I would of course see him in the depressive side of that. People donât generally want our help if theyâre manic.â He gave Jury a weak smile.

âNo. But you might be oversimplifying there.â There were too damned many ways of looking at a problem to see an answer clearly.

âHow do you mean?â

âA person torn between faith and doubt, say, wouldnât necessarily be unhappy.â

The priest shook his head. âI think that would be the greatest unhappiness of all.â

Jury felt the man so self-satisfied he wanted to shout: *Shut it, will you?* These clerics with their preordained solutions. Instead he said, âIf youâre considering the biggest question of all, happiness doesnât even come into it, does it?â

âIt sounds as if youâve given the matter some thought.â

âNo, Iâve given it no thought at all. Thanks for your time. Iâve got to be going.â

Jury rose and was halfway up the aisle when he turned and asked, âWhat about the third time?â

Father Martin looked puzzled. âThe third time?â

âYou said youâd seen him two or three times. When was the third? â

The priest frowned, thinking. âOh, that would have been another time he came to church. Morning matins, I think.â

âHe wasnât a Catholic.â

âFor some, that doesnât keep them away.â

SIXTEEN

All of this having been said about Lamb Houseâand contrary to his refusal to goâMelrose immediately began to ready himself, if not in the sense of packing up the Bentley, then of trying on, like traveling clothes, various attitudes. The mere mention of Henry James did this to him, especially after that Henry James contest they had all begun in the Jack and Hammer, having been inspired by that ridiculous con man whoâd turned up calling himself Lambert Strether.

And if there was ever a Lady Watermouth, she sat now opposite him on the sofa, stuffing in currant scones buttered, jammed, and double creamed. Nothing was left to the imagination on his auntâs plate.

Melrose put aside his *Hermit News,* wondering where Mr. Blodgett had gotten to. It was high time he showed up as unkempt hermit, wild-eyed and shock-headed and raised-fisted, to rattle her and send her running. Sometimes it worked, sometimes not. Mr. Blodgett was as nice an old soul as Melrose had ever met, and it was hard for him to play the madman, no matter how much he was paid, and he was paid plenty.

Agatha (Lady Watermouth nÃ©e Ardry) certainly never stopped objecting to Mr. Blodgett. âDonât you think the joke has gone far enough, Melrose?â

âNo joke can.â He picked up his thimble of port and *Country Life,* eager to see what the young lady of the week was doing.

âCan what?â

He leveled a look at her. âWhat you just said: can go far enough.â

She shook her head and rolled her eyes. âRiddles, riddles.â

Country Life was a handsome magazine; it glimmered and shimmered with a promise that largely went unkept. The doll of the week was a Miss Gertrude Frobisher-Stauton, and she was holding a

pig. Well, why not? If the magazine ever wanted to do a series on British peers who had jettisoned their titles (himself, in other words, although he imagined there must be others), he would be happy to pose holding a goat. He didnât want to break the spell his imagination could toss over this picture like a veil, so he just made up the caption. The captions were pretty much always the same, giving age and rank andâin this caseâwhat the pig meant. It would also likely state where this lovely girl was going to school, or where she would be spending her gap yearâin Miss Frobisher-Stautonâs case, Paris. How terribly adventurous of her! He flipped back to the beginning of the magazine and its endless shots of overpriced properties. Melrose had actually found here the house that he had let for a few weeks in Cornwall. That was a year or so ago.

He turned another page and thought about this poor Maples chap and wondered what he had been doing at Lamb House. One would of course wonder what Maples had been doing at the hotel in Clerkenwell Road, since heâd been murdered there, but why had Billy Maples opted for the tenancy of Lamb House?

Did he love Henry James? A lot of people liked Henry James, but that didnât mean they wanted to go to bed with him, in a manner of speaking. From the story sketched out by Jury, Lamb House seemed an unlikely venue for a man like Billy Maples.

âI donât know why you read that magazine, Melrose.â

âBecause itâs got pictures in it. Iâm checking out the housing market.â

âWhy?â

âTo see how much I could get for Ardry End.â

The sound of choking coming from the sofa caused him to look over the top of *Country Life,* in hopes that the choking might lead to something. No such luck. She was scanning the room, the Oriental rug, the doors, the sconces, the ceiling molding, like a valuer.

âDonât be silly. Why on earth would you even think about selling up?â She set about robbing a fairy cake of its pale pink fluting.

He hadnât been thinking of selling, but it was a tack to take: âWhy not? Itâs too big for me to be rattling around in all on my own.â He decided to throw out another delicious prospect. âOf course, I could marry, have a few childrenâ¦â

Agatha stopped the fairy cake halfway to her mouth and exclaimed, âWhat? And who in heavenâs name would you marry?â

He had returned to the photo of the honorable Gertrude Frobisher-

Stauton. âI met a lovely young lady the last time I was in London at my club. Gertie Frobisher. We talked at length. She was a bit young, perhaps, but that signifies nothing these days. She loves farm animals. Sheâd be great with Aghast.â He went back to his magazine.

âThatâs absolutely ridiculous!â

âNo, itâs true. She has a penchant for pigs.â

âIâm not talking about that, Iâm talking about her marrying you!â

âLots of women would marry me. Iâm rich, I have this estate.â Here he swept his arm round the room. âAnd my father was the seventh earl of Caverness.â

âAnd you are no longer the eighth earl, in case youâve forgotten.â She simpered, proud of the point sheâd made.

Hmph! âOh, most women donât give a damn for a title anymore.â He again regarded the Honorable Gertrude. They didnât? Since when? Even the pig looked as if it would not eschew a title.

âYouâre wrong there, I can tell you!â

Well, she should know, not being Lady Ardry at all, but having decided to call herself that after her husband (who was another âhonorableâ) had died. Heâd also been Melroseâs uncle, whoâd had the great misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

âNo, Iâm not wrong at all. Gertie is quite all right with my not having a title. She has one of her own. It probably makes her feel a little superior.â

âWell, really. You wouldnât want to marry a woman who felt she was better than you!â

âWhy not? It would keep her from messing in my affairs, as sheâd think her own were more important.â

Another scone half was being marmaladed. âIs she from a good family?â

âA pig-farming one.â

Agatha actually set her scone down on her small glass plate. âPig? *Pig farmers!* Now I know you canât be serious!â

âI see nothing objectionable. She wants to bring along several of them. Sheâs afraid sheâd miss them.â

âSurely, youâre not acquiescing to this monstrous plan!â

Melrose was looking at the honorable G. F.-S., raking the paragraph under her picture for fresh ideas. What amazed him was that Agatha apparently thought Melrose had indeed proposed marriage, despite his telling her he had only just met Gertrude. âWhen sheâs finished her gap year. She intends to spend it in

Zimbabwe, working as a volunteer with MÃ©dicins Sans FrontiÃ¨res.â

âWhat on earth is that?â

âDoctors Without Borders. They got the Nobel Peace Prize, in case you didnât know.â

âAre you saying sheâs a doctor?â

âNo, of course not. Although sheâs thinking about veterinary medicine.â

Then it struck Agatha, apparently, that Gertrude was still in school. âGap year! Melrose, how old is this person?â

âOh, twentyish.â G. F.-S. was more eighteenish, according to the magazine.

âYouâre old enough to be her father!â

âYes, but Iâm not.â He slapped the arms of his cozy chair and rose. âWell, Iâm off!â

âThe Jack and Hammer, I expect.â

âFor a farewell drink. Then to Rye.â

That stopped a rock cake in midair. Twice in a morning, a record! âWhat are you talking about? Thatâs the coast of Sussex, for heavenâs sakes.â

âThe last I heard. Donât get up. Iâll see myself out.â

SEVENTEEN

Trueblood, looking out of the Jack and Hammerâs bay window, said, âBut this is perfect!â He looked at Melrose. âTake it as a sign!â

Melrose, occupying the window seat with Vivian, turned, as did Vivian. Joanna stood up to see. Diane Demorney didnât bother.

âAgatha and, would you believe it, our own Mr. Lambert Strether.â

That got Dianeâs attention. âHow marvelous! We can continue the Henry James experiment.â

âHere they come,â said Joanna. âHere they come.â

The five of them arranged themselves for the encounter.

A gust of air wrapped them in its chilly embrace as the outside door was shoved open and the two appeared.

âAgatha!â exclaimed Melrose. âThat was quick. I just left you at the house. And I do believe itâs Mr. Strether.â

âYes, Mr. Strether,â said Diane. âWe wondered where youâd got to. You left in such a rush.â

Trueblood and Melrose had risen to shake the impossibly named Lambert Stretherâs hand. Trueblood pulled a couple of chairs around from another table and insisted the two join them. Strether barked out an order to Dick Scroggs for a gin and tonic and a shooting sherry. Dick did not regard Lambert Stretherâas did the other fiveâas a source of horseplay. Dick merely thought him an idiot.

âNow, Strether, are you riding around on your horse, or mine, looking at property?â said Melrose.

Strether gave a bellicose laugh. â*Your* horse? Neither. But I have indeed viewed some property. If you recall, I was interested in the old pub on the hill.â

âThe Man with a Load of Mischief,â said Vivian.

âAnd I believe it was youââhere he looked at Joannaââwho led me

to believe you were buying it?â

Joanna had about as much interest in the pub as in a flea circus, but she nodded to him.

Strether smiled meanly. âExcept the agent said there was no offer on the table.â

Joanna wrote some words in her notebook with a flourish. âThat agent. Sheâs so absent-minded, itâs absurd.â

Said Strether, âItâs a *he*!â

âSee what I mean?â said Joanna.

At this, both Agatha and Strether knit their brows. The others acted as if the answer made sense.

Strether went on. âAnyway, you might be surprised to hear that the FOR SALE sign has come down.â

âI canât remember there was ever one up,â said Melrose.

âMetaphorically speaking, then.â

âMelrose remembers nothing of importance,â said Agatha, taking the sherry from Dickâs tray, after which Dick set down the gin and tonic.

âActually,â said Strether, pausing to drink, âIâve inherited it.â His smile put his tarnished teeth on vivid display.

âHow do like that?â Agatha said, as if sheâd just trumped every ace in their deck. She was pleased as punch that Mr. Lambert Strether had thrown a spanner in the works, whatever the works and whatever the spanner. âSo you see, the Mischief will be opening soon!â

Strether had the grace to appear humble. âLetâs not count our chickens, Lady Ardry.â

If one could call the objets dâart in Ardry End chickens, Agatha was always counting them, apparently convinced that, number one, she would inherit the lot and, number two, Melrose, some thirty years younger, would die first.

âI donât understand,â said Trueblood, pretending to be vexed by all of this. âWhen you were here beforeâand itâs only been a couple of weeksâyou did not know about your good luck, or your inheritance.â

âWe-ll, I didnât know for a certainty, so I wasnât prepared to raise the point, especially after youââhe tilted his head in Joannaâs directionââsaid you were buying it.â

Not rising to the bait, Joanna simply turned a page of her marked-in-red manuscript.

Melrose said, âNow, the last owner was a man by the name of Matchett, Simon Matchett. Before that, it was a Mr. Lipseed, who

owned it for some time before he got arrested. Before him we had a woman named Elerbee and her seven children. Now thatâs going a long way back.â Indeed, it was so far back that Melrose hadnât the slightest idea where it would lead. The pub could have been owned by his goat, Aghast, for all he knew, in partnership with his hermit, Mr. Blodgett. âHence Iâm wondering, Mr. Strether, just who these ancestors of yours were.â

Strether poured the rest of his gin down his throat and smiled. âA great-great-great-granduncle and-aunt, the White-Winterbothams.â

âWhite-Winterbotham? The only time Iâve heard that name was in connection with a triple murder in Clapham. A grisly affair. Are these your people?â

âOf *course* not. Itâs an old, old family from Yorkshire. Theyâve had their share of OBEs.â

âWeâve had our share of DUIs but it hasnât got us anywhere.â Trueblood was severing the tip from one of his Montecristo cigars. Rarely did he smoke one.

Vivian said, âThis is the first weâve heard about anyoneâs having a connection to the pub. Itâs been well over a decade since it was occupied. That was when Mr. Matchett ran it. And since he had no wife, no children, no relations at all, he left The Man with a Load of Mischief to the village. Long Piddleton. Yes, we thought that extremely generous of him.â

No, he didnât and no, we didnât, certainly not after he made a pigâs breakfast of everything on his way out of town, thought Melrose.

There were wide eyes and slightly open mouths when Vivian produced this bit of high history, and from other than Mr. Strether.

âWell, Vivian,â said Trueblood, fascinated by her inventiveness. âYouâre right. Iâd forgotten that. Damned decent of him.â

But Strether was not giving up so easily. âIâm sorry to disappoint you, Missââ

âRivington.â

âMiss Rivington. But the White-Winterbothams passed it on to their progeny. Perhaps this Matchett fellow was landlord, just renting it. He hadnât it within his power to dispose of it.â

âYou can prove all of this, Mr. Strether?â inquired Melrose.

Mr. Strether was looking over his shoulder, trying to corral Dick Scroggs for another gin. So Agatha answered for him. âCertainly heâs got proof. The documents are with his lawyer in London.â

Scroggs came with another gin, half of which Strether got down in

one go. He sat and gave a bleary smile.

Diane, smoking in her languid way, said: âI think, Mr. Strether, you might find your claim to this pub less certain than you suppose. You are not, you know, the only claimant.â

Both Lambert Strether and Agatha looked at her narrowly. Diane was a complete mystery to Agatha. An unpleasant one.

âIf youâre talking about this villageâs inheriting, as Iâve just saidââ

âNo, no,â said Diane. âThe claims are far more certain than that.â

Now all of them were leaning slightly toward her, all with a curious gaze.

âThen what on earth are you talking about?â

âWell, good heavens, Agatha, are you so out of touch with Long Piddleton you donât *know*?â Dianeâs smile was crafty.

Agatha hesitated, âWell, yes, I do have my ear to the groundâ¦â

And the wall and the door and the keyhole, thought Melrose, who was himself fascinated by what Diane had just said.

Lambert Strether looked at her, hoping probably for some cue. He returned his gaze to Diane. âExactly what are you talking about?â He could not keep the anxious note out of his voice.

âAbout the many claims to the property? Itâs a bit mixed up. You know. Extremely difficult to sort: whose father was whose son or whose cousin was whose wife or whose aunt was whose grandmother. Well, you get the picture.â Diane raised her glass as if toasting confusion. âAnd all of them, at least the ones we know about, all of them have the papers. Why do you think the old pub has been untenanted for fifteen years?â

Agatha shut her mouth and opened it again. âI donât know what on earth youâre on about. I know nothing of this.â To her companion she said, âLambert, are we going?â

Lambert Strether looked disinclined to leave the present company. He clearly wanted to hear more.

âCome on, Lambert! They havenât a grain of sense among them.â

Fully baffled by this turn in the talk, he mumbled a yes-yes and drank off his gin and tonic. âLetâs go, then, shall we?â

They roseâneither of them leaving even a deposit on the table toward their drinksâand bundled themselves out the door.

âNow what in hell? White-Winterbotham?â said Melrose. âWell, he couldnât possibly have any legal right to the place, surely.â

âDiane, Iâm intrigued. You certainly put the wind up our local

confidence man. What are you thinking of?â

âBleak House, obviously. You know, the interminable legal battle over Jaundice and Jaundice.â

âJarndyce,â said Melrose. âJarndyce and Jarndyce. Are you telling us you read *Bleak House*?â

âNot the entire book, no, probably the only one who did was Dickens. But I did skim over the marvelous legal and courtroom scenes; they reminded me of my divorces. As far as wrangling is concerned, Dickens is right on the money. Thank God there werenât estate agents tossed into the mix or he wouldâve died with the book unfinished.â

âIt rattled our friend Strether, certainly,â said Vivian.

âRattling isnât enough,â said Diane. âNo.â She sipped her drink and drew in on her cigarette. âNo, Mr. Strether does not give up easily.â Diane looked through the scrim of smoke with narrowed eyes.

They waited. She thought. Thinking was not an experience that came around every day for Diane. âWe need a few strangersâor at least strangers to Mr. Stretherâwhich shouldnât be too hard.â Diane looked around the room, her eyes falling on Dickâs char.

Undescended from Cinderella, Mrs. Withersby was taking her rest, sitting on one of the trestle benches on either side of the fire, which roared along like the last steam engine to leave Victoria. Mrs. Withersby spat into the fire. The fire spat back.

âDo you think she could round up a few of her nearest and dearest? She has relations, doesnât she?â

âBy all accounts, yes.â

âWould she do it for fifty quid, dâyou think?â

âSheâd do it for fifty pee, Diane. Sheâd do it for a fag.â

âLetâs call her over.â

It was unusual that theyâd have to, as Mrs. Withersby ordinarily found some excuse to hang around their window table to cadge cigarettes and gin.

âShall I ask her if she wants to earn a bit of money?â

That was like asking a cactus if it would like to spend a while in the sun and sand.

âWhatâve you got in mind, Diane?â Melrose was absolutely fascinated that Diane had anything at all in mind. Although, he reminded himself, she had worked out a brilliant scheme for getting rid of Vivianâs old flame. Count Dracula had beat it back to Florence after Diane shot a few home truths at him. Perhaps getting rid of

people was her forte? Perhaps she should get mobbed-up?

Diane must have been reading his mind. âMelrose, youâll have to keep Agatha out of the way.â

âPermanently?â

âSorry,â she said to him with a sly smile. âJust for this; just to get rid of Mr. Strether.â

âHow?â

âWhat I said before: Jaundiceââ

âJarndyce.â

âRight.â She sighed. âI wish Richard Jury were here. He added such panache to Mr. Stretherâs departure the first time.â

They all agreed and sent up a collective sigh.

âBut I suppose,â Diane added, âheâs got other things to do.â

EIGHTEEN

He had other things to do, yet they all seemed to take the form of Lu Aguilar. That voice: he had never paid much attention to its tone and timbre before because theyâd been otherwise engaged. And the phone talk had never been more than a handful of words, until this morning, as she was speaking at lengthâor for her, at length. She was calling from the Zetter.

âArenât you dressed yet?â

He had the phone in the curve of his shoulder, rather wishing it were her face. He was tying a shoelace. âItâs eight a.m.â

âHalf the worldâs at work by now.â

âThat would be your half, I take it?â

âIâm in the dining room. Iâve just ordered breakfast. I said not to take the other place setting away.â

âThat would be for me, would it?â

She took the question as rhetorical. âI ordered granola.â

Jury set down his half-drunk tea. âNot my dish. Iâm full English breakfast to the hilt.â

âWe need to put our heads together.â

âIs that what itâs called these days?â

âDonât be bloody stupid. Come on.â

Click.

Jury drank off his tea and pulled on his coat. He took the stairs beyond his door three at a time.

Â

The Zetterâs dining room had a fair number of customers and yet the tables were far enough apart that you werenât putting your spoon in another tableâs granolaâan image Jury found faintly erotic. He smiled.

It was what Lu was eating, a mountainous bowl of granola, topped with rhubarb. She was wearing a stoplight red sweater, but her face still looked sleepy. He sat down before the other place setting and he watched her shove a spoonful of the cereal in a mouth heâd gotten to know well. âRhubarb?â

âCan you imagine? If you donât like granola, believe me, this will change your mind.â She spooned up a cluster of grains, nuts, and rhubarb and held it to his mouth.

The gesture was so intimate, he felt like booking a room. âYouâre right,â he said as he chewed it. âItâs good.â

âHere comes your breakfast now.â

âHow did you knowââ

Her look said *oh, please.*

The fresh-faced waitress put down Juryâs plate: eggs, bacon, mushrooms, tomato.

He was hungrier than heâd thought. He plowed right in. The eggs were so perfectly cooked they were luminous.

âTell me about Rye. You saw Kurt Brunner?â

Jury told her what theyâd said.

âDo you like him for this shooting?â

âI donât know yet. If he was the one coming to see Billy, Iâd find that odd.â

âWhy?â

âBrunner would hardly make an appointment to see him; he saw him every day.â

She nodded, sat back. âAre you done?â She eyed his plate.

âAlmost. More coffee?â He picked up the French press. She shook her head. He poured more for himself.

âIâve been eating this granola for twenty minutes and the bowlâs still full. I want to go up to the room.â

âThe crime scene. You want me to go? Us?â He tried to make the âusâ bristle with implications, all unwise.

Aguilar rolled her eyes. âThis is a murder investigationââ

Jury sniggered and polished off his last bit of egg.

âAnd we have *some* self-control, Iâd hope.â

âMaybe I do, but you donât.â

She balled up her napkin and tossed it at him.

Â

Upstairs, Jury kept his distance.

She was reviewing a probable sequence of events. âHe comes in, tosses his key card down, picks up the phone to call room service. Maybe at some point, he uses the bathroom. He orders his supper.â Aguilar sat in the chair at the long shelf where the tray had been, picked up the phone receiver, set it down. Then she rose and stood looking at Jury, but he didnât think she was seeing him. She looked bemused. âWhy didnât he take off his jacket? Youâd have done, wouldnât you?â

âPerhaps. Perhaps not. There might have been other things of greater immediacy.â

âSuch as?â

âPhone calls. He calls room service, he makes another call. Or calls.â

âBut that doesnât explain *after* the food comes. *Especially* before he ate something as messy as that hamburger. Mustard, ketchup drips, and youâre eating with your hands, too. That Italian-designer jacket? Armani, was it? What was it? Youâd take that off, surely.â

âMaybe he did and then put it on again.â

She thought about that. She went on: âHe makes another phone call, and then goes out to the terrace.â She trailed her little story out there.

He followed, stood near the table in the corner against the wall.

She was leaning on the balustrade, wind blowing her hair. âHe stood out hereâ¦. He didnât smoke, did he?â

âNot if this ashtray is evidence.â Jury picked it up from the table, set it back, leaned against the wall. It was an open invitation.

She walked around the table, pressed him back.

âThis is a crime scene, love,â he said. The wind virtually blew the words across her face.

Close to his mouth, she said, âSoâs your flat.â

âTold you.â

âTold me what?â

âNo self-control.â

âHa. Iâm going to the station.â She stepped back. âWhat about you?â

âThe Melville Gallery. Iâve a thirst for art.â

âOr something.â She smiled and turned away.

NINETEEN

The tall, very blond girl named Hilda Tripp who worked at the Melville Gallery said, âHe was just so generous.â She made a pass at her eyes with a sodden tissue. âMost artists, as you can appreciate, have a hard time making ends meet.â

Jury said, âBilly Maples put up his own money to help some of your artists, is that right?â

She nodded as she pushed up the sleeves of her vivid lavender cashmere sweater. She was remarkably blond; her eyes remarkably empty, except of tears. It surprised Jury that a person with such little affect would be working in the heady environs of the Melville Gallery. Yet she had been for six years, stationed here to greet customers, so perhaps he was wrong about the emptiness of the eyes.

The owner was out, so Hilda would try, she said, to help about the Billy Maples case.

âWe were devastated,â said Hilda.

Jury nodded. âIt was a blow, I expect. Do you know anyone who might have wanted to harm him?â

She shook her head in such a decisive manner that her pale hair swirled above her shoulders like wheat in the wind. âNot given the way he was.â

âWhat way was that?â

âHe was, you know, like an angel. I mean, the way West End theaters and Broadway plays have them.â

âYou mean a benefactor?â

âThatâs right. And heâd do it through the gallery, anonymously. Heâd arrange with LindaâLinda Bevins, the ownerâto give the money to whatever artist he wanted to have it. You know, an angel, as I said.â

âI know. But after heâd done this more than once, the painters

must have worked it out that he was the angel.â Jury smiled. He liked the word in this context.

âNot really. Linda would say it was one or another elderly art lover who wished to remain anonymous. And it wasnât based on which artist was the best. There were other conditions.â

âWhat were they? The criteria?â

âOf course they would have to have a lot of talent, but they would, wouldnât they, if they were showing here? Then there was need. Some of these paintings sell for a great deal more than others. For instance, thereâs this one by Calvin Lipp.â Here she moved Jury to a large canvas on the west wall suffused in natural light. âIt sold for four thousand pounds.â

Juryâs eyebrows shot up. Not only at the amount but at what the four thousand had bought. It was a generic scene, bucolic, of sheep in a field with trees. No matter how the painting had tried to disguise its ordinariness with a blur of brush strokes, it was simply representational and boring.

Hilda apparently thought so, too. She whispered, although the few people in the gallery were well out of earshot, âCalvin thinks heâs another Constable. Can you imagine?â

Jury laughed. âNo, I canât. But the one who bought it apparently thought he was. So I take it that this Calvin Lipp would not be a front-runner for Mr. Maplesâs largesse?â

The hair swung again, decisively. âDefinitely not.â

âHow often did he do this? Was it an annual contribution?â

âOh, much more often than that. When he seesâsawâwork that he was especially enthusiastic about.â

âHe came here frequently, then?â

She nodded. âHe was at the reception for Getz Johns. It wasnât very well attended.â

âThat was the same nightââ

Sadly, she smiled, and again dabbed at her eyes.

âWhat prompted this role of benefactor? He wasnât a painter himself, was he?â

âNo. But he seemed so sympathetic to the whole process, to the whole notion of art. Well, I donât know. I donât know how to put it or what prompted him.â She frowned slightly, as if in not knowing she had somehow failed. âExcuse meââ

A phone was ringing somewhere and she took herself off to answer it.

Jury looked around; there were only three people in the gallery besides himself and Hilda: a boy and girl holding hands, both with backpacks, both in jeans; a middle-aged man in an expensive overcoat with a dark green velvet collar, who had been standing for a long time before an ambrosial concoction of clouds as plump as marshmallows in a sky of liquid blue.

The whole thing, Jury thought, *might just leap off the wall.* He wondered why it hung here, it was so wrongâeven he, hardly a judge of art, thought it badâexcept perhaps it wasnât. After all it was here and had captured the attention of a perfectly intelligent-looking viewer. Jury wanted to ask him, to go over and pin him down about the paintingâs artistic merit.

But the experience set him thinking about Billy Maples and how Jury suspected people, including himself, had got him wrong. His attention drifted, like the marshmallow clouds themselves, to the painting. Getting Billy Maples wrong, or not telling the truth.

While he waited, he decided to join the gentleman in front of the cloud painting. After a few moments, Jury said, âI guess I just donât see it.â

The man in the overcoat glanced at him, not bothered by a strangerâs interrupting his meditation on clouds. âDonât see what?â

âWell, youâve been looking at this for a long time. Apparently you think itâs rather good.â

The observerâs smile was thin-lipped but still warm and amused. âNot necessarily. But itâs hanging here in this gallery, which rarely puts a foot wrong, so perhaps Iâve been studying it for the same reason youâve been studying me. Trying to work out why theyâd hang such a bloody awful painting. At least thatâs how I see it.â

Jury had been expecting a rebuff or a lecture on contemporary art, not agreement. Certainly not agreement couched in the language he himself would use. Now they were both looking at it. The little card beside it announced the painting as *Nebulae.*

âThe point is, I think,â began Juryâs new acquaintance, âto look for a good long time before deciding whether one likes something or not.â

âTo be fair, you mean?â

âYes, but not to the painting, which still looks to me like a childâs painting; no, not fair to art, but to yourself. I imagine weâd be the losers if weâd pronounced an artist like, say, Roy Lichtensteinââ

âThe comic book painter?â

âYes, had we said Roy Lichtenstein was a comic book painter.â

Jury laughed. The couple whoâd been transfixed by their own paintingâone of cowsâhad heard and looked around and smiled, then turned back to the cows and laughed, too, as if the antics of these other two had freed them to do so. They moved on to the next painting: similar cows, different configuration. They stood each with hands clasped behind their backs as they rolled slightly, back and forth, on their feet. They laughed again.

Jury wondered what had happened to Hilda. *Jesus, what sort of copper are you that instead of lighting dynamite under a witness, youâre standing here bouncing on your feet? What do you think this is, Jury? A game?* Racer wasnât there to ask the question, so Jury asked it for him, and in just as snarly a voice.

Then, as if wondering about Hilda had conjured her up out of fog and ashes, she came toward him. âIâm sorry; a friend was in a bit of a muddle.â She shrugged her shoulders in place of any further explanation. She turned to lead Jury into another part of the gallery.

âItâs been nice talking to you,â said Jury to the art lover.

âI wonât be long, George,â she said to him.

George nodded. âNo hurry.â

As they moved away, Jury said, âI take it heâs a return customer.â

âOne whoâs awfully particular.â

Jury would have thought that art was something to be particular about.

âI wanted to tell you about someone you might wish to speak to. Sheâsâ¦she was a friend of Billyâs. I donât know how close they were but I do know they chummed about together.â

It had been a long time since heâd heard that expression, but it seemed to fit this dreamy place, with its cotton candy clouds and cows and the young couple who dressed and acted in every way alike.

âThough I donât think,â Hilda continued, âwell, they might have been lovers. Itâs a woman named Angela Riffley. She lives in the West End. Mayfair. I know sheâs home now; that was her I was speaking to on the telephone. Here.â Hilda slipped a gallery card from the silver card holder on the table, turned it over, and wrote down the address. Then she handed it to Jury. âI think they might even have been engaged at one point, though, you know, sheâs a bit older.â

âHis fiancÃ©e? Have police talked to her?â Why hadnât this woman been mentioned?

âYes. Police were just round to her house. Thatâs why she called.â

âThanks for your help. Iâll go to see her.â Jury looked at the card. âMayfair. And the phone number?â

âItâs near Berkeley Square.â Hilda gave him the number and he thanked her again.

On his way out of the Melville Gallery, he stopped by the cloud painting again and shook his head again.

No sale.

THE TALENTED MRS. RIPLEY

TWENTY

It must have been Juryâs year for lovely women, although Angela Riffleyâs power was to be undercut by the manner she was intent on assuming, an ostentatious air of mystery.

She gestured for him to come in. âJust go on through, Superintendent. Iâm right behind you.â

For a few uncomfortable moments, he was sure she literally was.

âOn throughâ turned out to be a resplendent study or library, where she left him to take a seat, saying, âIâm just organizing some coffee; Iâll be back in a moment.â She was dressed in something scandalously lightweight and translucent and she seemed to leave on wings.

It was a well-furnished room, the furnishings being largely antiques that might have whetted Truebloodâs appetite. An inlaid gilt and mahogany library table against the far wall; the long case clock whose tone was so dulcetâit had just struck the half hourâit might have been apologizing for time passing; a carved oak *dressoir* near the marble fireplace in front of which sat a serpentine fire fender. Dark wood paneling stopped halfway up the walls, on which hung perhaps a dozen wild animal headsâseveral different kinds of big cats: tiger, cheetah, leopardâas well as a zebra, a mountain goat of some kind, and others that Jury couldnât even identify. There were numerous animal skins and Jury hoped the zebra-striped love seat he was sitting on wasnât one of them. Jury thought about Ernest Hemingway. Among these trophy heads hung a few dark brown and shriveled things that he wondered about. He was sitting some distance away from this wall and had no intention of drawing any closer.

Sitting around on tables and up on wall brackets was a heady collection of Lalique and Polish crystal and a parian figure of the Lady of the Lake. At least thatâs who he assumed the beauty in the flowing

gown to be; she was holding an oar and standing in the front of a boat. He picked it up, checked under the base. Minton. He had frankly never seen such swag. He picked up and then put down an object that looked like a miniature stump, dark and rough hewn, a piece of wood or thick vine one might have to hack oneâs way through in an Amazonian forest. What the hell was it doing on the coffee table? The table itself had a glass top that seemed to be protecting some document filled with a dense and untranslatable language. At this point, the Wiggins defense was coming into play: he would refuse to ask.

Angela Riffley was back with the coffee tray, which Jury rose immediately to help her with.

âYouâre welcome, you know, to something stronger.â

He smiled. âCoffeeâs fine.â

âWell, then *Iâm* welcome to something stronger.â She poured his coffee, left him with the sugar and cream and repaired to a drinks table, where she added ice to a few fingers of Glenlivet.

âIce in drinks seems to be the thing these days, but I donât see why.â

Returning to her seat on the sofa she said, âDecadent, isnât it?â

âItâs not decadent; it just melts, thatâs all. Miss Riffley, Iâm here about Billy Maples.â

âItâs Mrs., actually, and Iâm devastated by Billyâs death.â

Interesting that marital status came before devastation.

âIâm sorry. I had the impression you were single.â

âWell, of course. But I havenât always been. Thatâs my exâs little collection there on the wall.â She plugged a cigarette into a jade holder and smiled. âNorman was quite the adventurer, and I, too, though on a smaller scale.â

âThere were safaris, I take it?â

She laughed; it was a little like the ice cubes plinking about in her drink. âThere were safaris, yes.â

His look went up to the zebraâs head, which struck him as particularly poignant. âWhy the zebra?â

âWhy *any* of them? Souvenirs.â

âThen you didnât go with your husband?â

âOf course I did. I wasnât about to be left out of that male enclave.â

âI was thinking about Hemingway, looking at that wall.â He tilted his head toward it as if there might be a dispute as to where the

âsouvenirsâ hung.

âAh, yes, Ernest. We knew him. At a distance, but we knew him. My family I mean, my father. I was a small child that summer in Paris, but I can still remember sitting at a table at Flore and Ernest at the one beside ours with a friend who was telling stories and making him laugh like crazy. It might have been Scott Fitzgerald, I donât know. And after thatââ

Thus her conversation went among luminaries and those lit by them, from Provence to Alpine heights, to roaring waters, to some island in the Caspian Sea, to a savage tribe in Borneo that had Jury looking back at the wall and those misshapen brown objects.

She seemed to have done everything that was doable. Except, perhaps, murderânot that she couldnât do it, but had she? He wouldnât have been surprised. In all of this geography, she wasnât attempting to avoid Clerkenwell, Jury was pretty certain. He was also pretty certain she would be up to the murder at the Zetter, or any place else. If she hadnât been the one to barter for those shrunken things on the wall, she was just the one to display them. If she wasnât a Kurtz, neither was she a Marlow who worried about the collapse, the crumbling of civilization. Mrs. Riffley would be worried only about where she might be seated in the rubble.

No, Angela Riffleyâs mise-en-scÃ¨ne was the mysterious and exotic and her conversation was all in the interest of keeping her companionâs attention. If she felt interest in her was flagging, she would leap from one smooth rock to the next in very dangerous waters. She took, really, all sorts of chances, including the one that you wouldnât believe her. For one like Mrs. Riffley, whose life was all anecdote, that could result in disaster.

Had Billy Maples been serious about this woman? Very possibly. She was entertaining, seductive, obviously rich. There wouldnât have been a question about being after Billyâs money.

âI understand Billy Maples was your fiancÃ©.â

âLover is a better word.â

âYou werenât planning on marrying?â

âGod, no. Why would we do that?â

âToo bourgeois?â

She smiled. âToo boring.â

âBut you broke it off.â

âYes, by mutual agreement.â

âThere were no hard feelings?â

âNot at all. Ah!â she inhaled deeply. âA motive: the woman scorned. Or perhaps the older woman left for a younger?â

âDid that happen?â

âNo. Iâm a suspect?â

âOf course.â Sheâd like that. âAlthough we like to say witness.â

âSay anything you like!â

âYou went about together?â

She gave him a look. ââAboutâ? What else is a couple to do?â She said this with a chortle. âBut I hadnât seen him in weeks.â

âHave you been to Dust? More club than pub, really. A bit of nightlife.â

âNo, Iâve never been, actually. Was that one of Billyâs haunts? Dust. That reminds me of Byron. Billy liked poetry, you know. Byron described himself as âhalf deity, half dust.â Billy liked to say, âDrop the deity half and you have me.ââ

Jury smiled. âDust. Thatâs how he saw himself?â

âI think he would have said thatâs how *all* of us must see ourselves. Byron claimed he was cursed, that is, he thought the Byron name was cursed.â

âDid Billy think that of the Maples name?â

Angela gave a short laugh. âNot Billy. He wasnât really into self-dramatization. Although I will say he was awfully moody, rather mercurial.â

âWhat caused this, do you know?â

She shook her head. âThere never seemed to be, you know, an actual reason.â

âThese placesâhotel, club, churchâare quite close to one another. The barman in Dust remembered Billy. The priest at Holy Redeemer had seen him in church. Indeed, Billy had taken confession.â

Her eyes widened. âBilly? *Confession?* Thatâs ridiculous.â

âWas Billy then so opposed to organized religion?â

âNot at all. He simply wasnât involved. Oh, itâs a long story.â She waved away the long story with a gesture of her cigarette holder, stubbed out the cigarette, and planted another in it.

âIâm good for long stories.â

âIâm not.â

She was, apparently, not going to add to this. âHad his behavior changed at all recently? Did he seem, well, distant?â

âPreoccupied. Yes, something did change. But I donât know what caused it. What was different was hard to pin down.â

âBut you felt it.â

âOh, I felt it, yes.â

Jury thought for a moment. âYou didnât go to the art gallery reception? No, you couldnât have done because you said you hadnât seen Billy in weeks.â

âThatâs right.â

âAccording to Hilda Tripp, this reception was for an artist named Getz Johns.â

âJohn Getz, thatâs his name. He switched the name around so it would sound more interesting. Perhaps he was thinking of Jasper. Did you see his work? Itâs what youâd expect. Insufferable. Like him.â

Jury laughed. âIt certainly sounds so. Whoâs the manâKurt Brunnerâthat Billy shared his flat with in Sloane Street?â

âOh. Him.â A slight shrug of the shoulders. âHe was somebody Billy met when he was in Germany. Berlin, I think. As Billy put it, they just fell in together. So he took Kurt on as a kind of assistant. I donât know why heâd need one. But Billy was funny that way. He didnât have many friends, but the ones he hadâlike meâhe was very intense about.â

It was clear she didnât like Kurt Brunner, possibly because she was jealous of that particular intensity. She might regard these relationships as taking away from her own. âWhy did he decide to take on Lamb House?â

She looked quizzical. âLamb House?â

âThe house in Rye. It once belonged to Henry James.â

âOh, that. Iâve never been there.â

It almost sounded as if she thought her absence or presence in Billyâs affairs was what validated them. That sheâd never been to Rye to see him made Jury wonder just how âintenseâ Billy had been about her.

She said: âI do remember his talking about it. I told him he was ridiculous for thinking heâd like living in a little town like Rye, nothing to do, no museums, no Tate Modern *or* Britain, no theaters. I told him heâd not last more than a day there. So I expect I was wrong as he was there for months.â She reached for the coffeepot, set a hand against it. âCold. But I could do some more.â

âNo, thank you. Iâve got to be getting on.â

She went with him to the door. Sadly, she said, âIâm really going to miss him.â

This at least Jury could accept as utterly sincere and true.

Even Jury was beginning to miss him.

TWENTY-ONE

Melrose Plant set his mental clock back forty years and walked into Boringâs and felt right on time and right at home.

There were many gentlemenâs clubs in London but none quite like this one. There was Whiteâs, there was Boodleâs. There was the Garrick Club, catering for those men who shared an interest in the theater.

Boringâs, on the other hand, catered to nothing. The only reason to be in Boringâs today was because one had been here yesterday. Its members shared no particular interest, interest being pretty much catch as catch can when one was talking over a glass of whiskey in front of one of the lazy fireplaces, resting places for logs that drifted their flames about instead of shooting them.

Looking around, one might think the members had a lot in common, or shared some common goal, but that was in appearance only, skin deep, or newspaper deep. It was as though there used to be a world here in which members and staff âhung fireâ (as Jamesâs characters are always doing), just sitting around waiting for the end of the sentence. It was delightful.

His suitcase beside him, Melrose stood in the hall, marveling at Boringâs managing to look exactly the same as before. True, âbeforeâ had been only a few weeks ago, but weeks or years made no difference in Boringâs. Wasnât that the same fly that hung in the golden motes of light streaming through the front windows?

Melroseâs light-drenched daydream was interrupted by a voice addressing him. âLord Ardry! So nice to have you with us again!â

On the other side of the reception desk stood a small man with a face like a walnut who looked a hundred and probably was. Probably born in Boringâs and happy to remain.

âItâs Wendell, isnât it?â said Melrose. Wendell hadnât been here

the last two or three times; Melrose had naturally assumed he was dead.

âThatâs right. Howâve you been keeping, mâlord?â

âFine, just fine.â Melrose took a mint from a Lalique bowl. âWhat room am I to be in tonight?â

âWeâve put you in the Dolphin Room, Lord Ardry. I hope that will be to your satisfaction.â The old porter came around from behind the desk and made to pick up Melroseâs case.

âNo, no, thank you, Wendell. Iâll do it.â He was afraid the little man might drop down in a heap if he carried as much as a whiskey glass.

The Dolphin Room looked to be exactly like the room heâd had before, which had another nameâWhale or Great White Shark?âall equally irrelevant. He stood looking around and was then struck by a small epiphany: Boringâs was in the realm of the Platonic idea; Boringâs was the idea from which all other menâs clubs were fashioned. The others were but shades. Boringâs was the real thing!

This pleasant realization stayed with him as he did his mite of unpacking after which he went downstairs for a drink.

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Thus at seven oâclock, Melrose was seated in the Membersâ Room, waiting for Jury, whiskey in hand and looking, he was sure, as if heâd never left, like the little group chatting over there, or the several more in various states of somnolence. And this was the lively hour, the sacred hour when drinks are taken and dinner is soon to be.

His pals, Major Champs and Colonel Neame, were not here. He enjoyed the hush. No raised voices, no raucous laughter, no mobile phones.

He opened *The Sacred Fount,* followed the account of a house party at Newmarch that was relayed by the unbelievably nosey narrator, and thought about this singular exchange of a life force that rendered the young partner old and the old one young. So it was for the Brissendens, and so it might be for others at Newmarch, were the narrator able to discover them.

What the deuce was Henry James up to with this vampire theme? Mulling this over, Melrose held his not-quite-empty glass up over the back of his wing chair as a sign for the porter to bring another and felt it immediately slipped from his handâdamn but these porters were quick!âand a voice saying thanks.

He whipped his head around and found Richard Jury downing the last of the whiskey. He returned the empty glass to Melrose. âI needed that.â

âWell, get your own.â

âI intend to. What are you reading?â

The young (the only young) ginger-haired porter was sloping by with his tray and took the order for two whiskies.

â*The Sacred Fount.* Itâs ponderous.â

âItâs Henry James, for Godâs sakes. What would you expect?â

âWell, I canât picture Henry James writing about vampires.â

âItâs not about them; itâs the *theme*.â

âHow can it be a theme if there arenât any vampires trooping in from Transylvania?â

âThatâs Dracula,â said Jury. âHe is not the only vampire in town.â

âSo there are vampires in the story, just not Dracula.â

Trying to be patient, Jury said, âNo. There are no actual, real, livingâwell that could be better putâno actual vampires.â

âSo thatâs whatâs going on with the Brissendens? Thereâs this couple named Brissenden. The narrator is startled to see that Mrs. Brissenden looks much, much younger than she did when last he saw her, and that Brissenden, who is actually over a decade younger than his wife, now looks twenty years older.â Melrose, as enamored of this tale as if he himself had written it, leaned forward in his chair. âSo you see, Mrs. Brissenden is drinking at the sacred fount of her husbandâs life force. She is not drinking blood, but life.â

âWhatâs for dinner tonight?â

Melrose fell backward. âYou didnât hear one thing of what I just said.â

âYes, I did. I drank in every bloody word.â

âVery funny. Hysterical. Letâs eat.â

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They had their long-running contest over what Boringâs would be serving for dinner. This evening Jury had guessed sole and Melrose beef.

Young Higgins snapped the big snowy napkins into their laps and said, âTonight, weâve an excellent Dover sole.â

Melrose swore softly. They ordered sole.

âIâve worked it out, the reason you win,â said Melrose when Young Higgins had taken himself off to get the soup. âBefore you

come into the Membersâ Room you nip round to the kitchen and see whatâs on for dinner.â

âDonât be absurd. Do you really think Iâm that childish? Youâre just sore because you lost again. What wine are we having?â Jury had opened the wine list. âHereâs a nice CÃ´tes du RhÃ´ne for a hundred quid the half. Can you afford that?â

Melrose snatched the leather holder from Juryâs hand. He settled on a Chardonnay at thirty quid and said, âCan I afford it? Why am I always paying for dinner?â

âBecause youâre rich.â

âWell, itâs a point. What have you found out?â he asked as Young Higgins placed their soup before them.

âAbout what?â

âAbout what? About the reason weâre here. About Billy Maples, about murder, about Lamb House.â

âJust a bit ago I talked with Billyâs former lover. They split up. Sheâs a woman named Angela Riffley.â Jury laughed and shook his head.

âWhatâs so funny.â

âItâs just that sheâs soâ¦indefatigable. I mean, I doubt thereâs anything you can think of she hasnât done, or at least is extremely talented in giving the impression sheâs done.â

âHeh, heh. The talented Mrs. Ripley.â

Jury laughed. âVery good. Thatâs her in a nutshell. Everyone says Billy Maples was moody. I get the impression it might be more than moodiness. He might have been manic-depressive. Now of course we use the euphemism bipolar disorder.â

âYou think that was Billyâs problem?â

âI know Iâd like to see some medical records. Or itâs quite possible that he was never diagnosed.â Jury felt cheered by the displacement of soup for sole. Was there anything finer than a Dover sole? With it were new potatoes, carrots, and brussels sprouts. âHilda Trippââ

âWhoâs she?â Melrose broke off part of a bread roll.

âAs far as Hildaâs concerned, Billy walked on water.â Jury went over the conversation in the art gallery.

âWhat about this Brunner chap? Or Billyâs grandfather? He should know him better than almost anyone, from what youâve told me.â

âSir Oswald said he had mood swings. My mood right now, for instance, is really good because once more I won the dinner contest.â

âIâm glad you werenât in on the Henry James contest. Iâm looking forward, actually, to Lamb House. It will be quite pleasant to steep myself in the Jamesian atmosphere.â

Jury wasnât sure he liked the sound of that. âJust remember what youâre there for. Donât start in writing, or anything like that, for Godâs sakes.â

âWriting who? You?â

âNot letters. A book. Before youâve been in Lamb House twenty-four hours, youâll be fancying yourself a novelist.â

âDonât be absurd. Although, you know, I could finish my detective novel.â

Jury speared a new potato and groaned. âWith that detecting couple? Nick and Nora?â

âNorma.â

âOh, well, thatâs a relief. I thought you were ripping off *The Thin Man*.â Jury cast about for Young Higgins. âWhere is he? Iâd like some more sprouts.â

âVeggies.â

âThatâs a word that should be driven to the ground with a stake through its heart. One more American expression that managed to make the transatlantic trip when it should have drowned. Why do Americans have to be so damned cute?â

âI donât know. We could ask the Boston Strangler. What am I there for? In Lamb House, I mean.â

âTo look and listen. Not to write a novel.â

âIâm looking and listening twenty-four hours a day?â

Jury nodded.

âWhat, I canât entertain myself by puttering around the garden and snapping beans for the cook?â

âNo. The cook, incidentally, you should keep on, along with any other staff. Itâs Kurt Brunner, especially, I want you to listen to.â

âShould I be wired?â

Jury looked up from his Dover sole at Melroseâs simpering grin. He matched it with a grin of his own. âYou already are.â

What was that supposed to mean?

TWENTY-TWO

It was a soft April day and his lambâs wool coat was too hot. Melrose removed it and was about to toss it over a chair when he remembered whose house this was. Or had been.

Was it to be like this with every curtain and rug, every ornament and ashtray? Ashtrays made him wonder if Lamb House was a smoke-free establishment. That was a detail he hadnât stopped to consider. He would probably be taking his smokes on the stoop or in the garden. He could only hope that wasnât part of the zone, too.

It was absurd for him to feel like an intruder, as if even displacing the air he moved through was an intrusion. Would he be able to sit in a chair, drink from a cup, eat with a fork? Well, it was he who had told the lady from the National Trust that, no, he didnât need to be met at the house; he could handle the move.

He was still holding his coat. He did not see a coat cupboard or a hook and he carefully draped the coat over a banister and began his tour of the house.

Well, he would get used to it. He would come to be more relaxed. He did not convince himself that this was entirely true.

In the dining room, he inspected the James notebook that had been put on display. What elegant handwriting! To say nothing about the play of language. Together, they made Melrose feel he should never write another word. Instead of words, heâd use smoke signals.

From there he went into what was probably a sitting room and was ranging over the bookcase when he heard a throat being cleared and turned around.

The womanâah, he had forgotten the cook!âstood there, as round as a pudding, starched and clean to the point of purification, a relic of the old days.

âYouâre Mrs. Jessup?â

âYes, sir. I am sorry, sir, that I didnât open the door for you. I was out in the garden.â

âThatâs all right. Iâm very pleased youâre staying on, especially since my last cooking experience occurred that time I tried to boil the neighborâs cat. I was four.â

Mrs. Jessup laughed. âYouâre making that up, sir, arenât you?â

âDonât be too sure. Have you come to ask if I want tea?â

âIndeed I have.â

âThank heavens. I certainly do.â

âAnd would you want it in here, sir, or in the dining room?â

âOh, this room will do nicely.â

She took herself off.

Melrose thought he should take his case upstairs and unpack, but he didnât want to. He wanted to sit in this pleasant room and look at these books, most of which, not surprisingly, were by Henry James. He wondered if they were first editions. Would the Trust leave such valuable books around for tenants to filch or visitors to cart away? Probably not, probably just later copies. He took down one of themâ*The Wings of the Dove*âlooked at the copyright page and saw that this indeed appeared to be a first edition. He opened the book somewhere around the middle. Here were Kate Croy and Milly Theale. He tried to remember the story. Didnât Kate set her poor lover on rich Milly in the expectation that the doomed girl would leave her fortune to the man? What manipulation! What maneuvering!

What a perfect horror of a story. But there was always the element of violence in Jamesâs novels. The torture of Charlotteâwho? He couldnât think of the last name: Stant?âin *The Golden Bowl*. The Ververs might just as well have tossed acid in her face as send her off to the States where she would never have the joy of London society or the prince again. And the worst punishment of all was that everyone knew what was going on, except poor old Charlotte. And yet no one would speak of it. As with all of James, it was one thing to be gliding smoothly over the frozen lakeâs surface; but quite another when the hatchets were brought out to break the ice.

The Portrait of a Lady. The dreadful, dreaded Gilbert Osmond. Talk of torture! And of course there was *The Sacred Fount*. Melrose had never really thought about this side of James. Violence muffled by the most exquisite and civilized conversation.

He wondered about this all the while his tea was brought, poured, drunk.

Not that it had anything to do with the murder of Billy Maples.

A young manâworldly, rich, and handsomeâdecides to take up residence in an ancient port town in what had once been the home of a famous writer. A house he could inhabit only by going through the venerable, no doubt exacting, National Trust. He himself had not been subjected to such scrutiny, since it was arranged by a Scotland Yard superintendent:

âYou mean,â Melrose had said to Jury, *âtheyâre taking me on such short notice and without digging up my past and so forth?â*

âThey canât afford to be picky.â

Melrose wasnât sure heâd liked the sound of that.

He looked around the room as if it might offer up some clue as to Billyâs behavior.

Scones, raspberry jam, clotted cream. He looked at the tea tray that had been set before him and sighed. Putting a spoonful of jam on a scone, he could almost sympathize with his auntâs devotion to the afternoon ritual. Except Agatha did not partake of the silence that should surround it. As was this silence. Melrose sat back with a deep sense of contentment. Except for the long case clock ticking away and a small clatter coming from the kitchen, there was nothing to be heard. The rain had stopped; the sun shone wetly on the garden wall. A writerâs house, pure and simple.

Had Billy fancied himself a writer, then? No. There had been no hint of that from the people Jury had talked to. Melrose couldnât imagine any writer keeping his mouth shut about his work for long. He would be passing around pages and even paragraphs to his friends while talking their ears off. Billy Maples would certainly have said something about it. It could of course have been a secret ambition, but to realize it he would surely have had to be deluding himself if he thought it would help to live in a dead writerâs house.

He turned and looked at the books behind him, Jamesâs collected works, and felt fairly numbed by them. Characters tumbled through his mind, people so meticulously drawn that not a hair, not a pore, went unaccounted for.

The clock chimed and he realized heâd been holding the same scone in his hand for a quarter of an hour. Pleased to know he could master such a state of inertia, he thought he should move about a bit, as a man on a long railway journey decides to leave his seat and move up and down the aisle. He didnât get up.

He set his cup in the saucer, thinking them rather fine to be

trotted out for anyone who happened to be a tenant here. He sat for another few minutes. He thought he should take his case up and unpack and rose, then sat back down. The chair was by now molded to his contours. Was he going to invest insensate objects with sense? That was more the Poe school of thought than the Henry James one.

Melrose reached behind him and pulled out a collection of Jamesâs stories, one that included âThe Lesson of the Master.â He remembered this story because he had found it rather menacing: a renowned writer advised the narrator, an up-and-coming one, never to marry, as the demands of marriage would weaken his writing arm considerably. He would begin to write for money, which is what the older writer had come to, seeming to blame his wife for much of this as she had encouraged the inclination to write slick books for which he was handsomely compensated.

But James had done something rather horrible here. At the end, after the successful writerâs wife dies, he turns right around and marries the girl whom his young writer friend had sacrificed for the sake of his writing. Melrose wondered what the âlessonâ actually was. Was it merely self-serving? He closed the book and thought about it. Then he closed his eyes.

âI beg your parden, sirâ¦â

The cook was hovering over him. âI believe you mustâve fallen asleep. Iâm sorry to bother you, but I must be chugging along now.â

Melrose was stunned that heâd gone to sleep. He never slept in the afternoon. Not that he hadnât tried when Agatha was there. âOh, Mrs. Jessup. I expect I just nodded off.â

âThe trip probably tired you.â

The trip had been less than an hour and a half.

âAnyway,â she said, âIâve got to be somewhere at six-thirty, so Iâve left your dinner in the fridge and on the hob, all except the chop, which will be no trouble for you at all. Itâs marinating now. Then the veggies are all done, and you only need to pop them in the oven to heat up. Or the microwaveâ¦â She went on.

Pull up a chair, thought Melrose. In the time she was explaining what he was to doâand he could hardly keep a straight face, seeing himself with that marinated chopâthe meal could have been cooked and eaten and the two of them could be telling each other their life stories over coffee and brandy.

âThatâs perfectly all right, Mrs. Jessup. Iâll just poke about on my own. Dinner will be no problem.â Especially since he meant to go to

the Mermaid Tavern right up the street and order it.

âWell, then.â And she turned to go.

âThe gentleman who lived here beforeâ¦â He watched her hand fall away from her coat.

âMr. Maples, you mean. I still canât believe it.â

âSit down for a moment, would you?â

She sat and looked vacantly out of the window.

âI read about that in the paper,â said Melrose. âOne never knows whether newspapers give the whole story. Still, it did seem very peculiar.â

âIt was that, indeed. Iâll never understand it.â

He felt she said this as one who, for some reason, should. The topic had certainly stilled her, as if now she had no place to be at six-thirty. âHe lived in London, did he?â

âIn Chelsea, yes. Sloane Street.â

âSeems a bit strange, doesnât it, a chap like that taking on a National Trust property.â

âNo stranger than you, sir.â Then she seemed to realize this was impertinent and apologized.

He was a bit jolted by that response. But he smiled and said, âNot at all.â

She blushed and hurried on. âI mean, youâre to be here for such a short time, I was told.â

âThatâs perfectly true.â He smiled. âFavor for a friend.â

âI appreciate you keeping me on, sir. Itâll just give me some time to find another place before the permanent tenants move in.â

âPerhaps theyâll want you to stay, too.â

âI donât think so, sir. People who take up tenancy here, itâs not usual for them to have staff.â

They were getting wide of the mark and he inched the talk back to Billy Maples. âDid he strike you asââwhat stupid question was this going to be, *as the type whoâd get himself murdered?â*âas a person who was terrifically fond of Henry Jamesâs books?â

She thought about this. âI do know he liked reading these ones. Well, Iâve tried reading them, several times. I canât make any sense out of them, either.â

Melrose liked the âeither.â It was as if the murder of Maples and the words of Henry James were of equal weight.

âWas he a very sociable person? Given thisââMelrose looked round the room, gestured to take it all inââthis house and this small

town, Iâd think he was somewhat reclusive.â

âTo tell the truth, sir, yes, he did like society. He sometimes went back to his London flat for a day or two here and there. As I see it, he was a bit spoiled. I think he was used to having things done for him. Maybe that was the reason for Mr. Brunnerâthat was his assistant, though I donât know what needed assistingâbut Mr. Brunner was the one he spent his time with. Youâd think a rich and handsome man such as he, Billy Maples, quite the London playboy, I shouldnât wonder, would have a string of lady friends after him but I never saw one.â

She didnât go on, perhaps because what she was saying was so disapproving, so Melrose fell back upon the subject of James. âCould he have been writing something himself, say, a book about Henry James?â

âOh, I shouldnât think so, sir. Never saw him writing anything but the odd letter. If he was doing such a big project as a book, I expect heâdâve mentioned it.â

The long case clock chimed the half hour.

âOh, good heavens, itâs gone half-six. I must go.â She rose and so did Melrose, who helped her with her coat. âThat was an excellent tea, Mrs. Jessup. Thank you.â

ââTwas nothing. Now for supper you just take that chop from the marinade and slip it in the oven for about thirty minutes. But youâll want to check it after twenty, as that ovenâs always been kind of dodgy.â

He smiled. âIt wonât fool me.â

She laughed merrily and went out.

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Melrose wandered.

He wandered into the next room where hung a series of portraits of James at various periods in his life. They were all by John Singer Sargent and all wonderful, especially the last and justly famous. Sargent had caught the intellectual power of the man. Just looking at it, Melrose felt bathed in acuity, intelligence. Jamesâs quick bright eyes, his domed forehead. Melrose felt his own forehead to see if there was any resemblance. He guessed not.

He sat himself down in a Windsor chair and stared at it. *What is it that brought this young man here? Come on, you saw him every day. Was it something of a spiritual search, and if so, I wouldnât have thought youâd*

be chosen for that sort of pilgrimage. Or maybe Melrose was dead wrong about that.

Melrose sighed deeply. He was tired of trying to work things out for himself. *Youâre restraining a laugh, Mr. J., arenât you?*

He sat in the chair, looked at James through narrowed eyes and chewed at the corner of his mouth. *Of courseâ¦*

A spiritual guide? James himself had joined the Anglican Church, but leaving out the church just for the sake of argument. *Why wouldnât you make a spiritual guide?*

Melrose sat for a few more minutes and then, fed up with feeling like a rhetorical question, he slapped the chair arms and rose and went to the stairs, where his coat lay over the bannister.

He looked at his suitcase and decided that he could unpack later; right now he wanted to walk the cobbled streets of Rye.

TWENTY-THREE

It was a dreamy little town, stone streets no wider than lanes, shining now with rain and the ghostly light of dusk drawing in. The days were getting a little longer.

As long as he was here on the Sussex coast, he should do something touristy, take a walk back through history: Battle of Hastings and the whole 1066 thing. On second thought, he might overload his mind if he started with all thatâit was already threatening to short-circuit on Henry Jamesâand if there was anyone who could cause an electrical meltdown it was James.

He was walking up Mermaid Street to the tavern, looking at the life going on behind lit windows, a life blurred and indistinct seen through the leaded glass.

The Mermaid Tavern, now genteel and with its quite good restaurant, had once been a raucous, riotous pirate hangout. There was a famous gangâHawkhurst? Hawksmoor? No, that was the architect. The gang had holed up in the Mermaid. The entire town, the entire coast around here had been the haunt of smugglers.

Melrose wondered if Henry James had been attracted by Ryeâs piratical past. Probably. Some of his finer characters were emotional looters, that was certain. Look at Gilbert Osmond, on the surface a refined and worldly collector of artifacts. And people, and souls. It was the refinement, the gentility, the perfect calculation and calibrated behavior that made what he was doing so dreadful.

In the past few days, Melrose had read a great deal of James. In his coat pocket now, accompanying him to dinner, was âThe Aspern Papers.â Talk about *loot*! Talk about spoilation! He hit his fist into his hand. It was so *perfect*!

âI beg your pardon?â

A voice at his elbow. Melrose must have bumped into this man.

âYou were saying something?â

âOh. Iâm awfully sorry. One of those mental conversations.â

âIt was getting out of handâ came the smiling rejoinder.

Melrose laughed and felt sheepish and for some odd reason turned up his coat collar.

The Mermaid Tavern being full and with no prospect of a table for a half hour, Melrose chose another, far less renowned eatery. The surroundings here were comprised of a lot of dark wood, softly lit with the pleasant tinkle of cutlery tapping on china.

He was shown a table by a hostess of questionable provenance, as the accent seemed to hover somewhere between Ste. Germain-des-PrÃ©s and Bermondsey. She handed him a menu and flitted away. There were few other diners and a menu fueled largely by wishful thinking and a very big freezer. (Could they really have enough chefs back there to prepare lobster broiled, boiled, scampi, or thermidor; *pollo rostizado estilo YucatÃ¡n;* and the far more mundane *boeuf Burgundy*?) This menu was a testament to optimism. He was surprised it didnât offer escalloped peacock and ragout of brindled ocelot.

He could hardly wait to see the wine list!

And here it was, handed him by the hostess, before she whisked the other place setting away.

The *carte de vin* lived up to the menu. There must have been a half dozen pages of offerings, running from the house plonk (cheap enough at five pounds for the half carafe) to a Vosne RomanÃ©e at a price that would purchase Sandringham.

Good lord! This was Rye! East Sussex! Not the Place VendÃ´me! Not the Ritz! Itâd be hard to flog this list in Mayfair.

When the waitress came, a stout, Germanic-looking blonde, but with a beaming smile, he ordered the most elaborate dish on the menu, which he had to point to, since he couldnât pronounce it. All he knew was *poisson,* and its preparation looked as if it had been choreographed by Tommy Tune.

âWill you be having wine, sir?â

âOh, absolutely! Iâll have the Vosne RomanÃ©e.â

As if she used this wine for mouthwash, she didnât blink an eye, wheeled on her heel, and marched off, presumably to get it. Melrose only wished Henry James were here. What would he make of this setup?

The wish being father to the thought, Henry took the seat opposite and answered the question: *Well, itâs all perfect for you, dear fellow. I,*

however, am a man of simpler tastes. A good boiled potato and chop are all I require. Remember, thereâs one in your oven. With that he used a small tool to cut off the end of his cigar.

Melrose waited, humming. He wished Jury were here to place a bet. He wondered if the expressionless couple one table over would like to place one. They looked as if theyâd never had a drink in their lives. Well, thatâs what life is like if youâre a teetotaler.

Ah! Here she came with a bottle in tow.

Breezily, the waitress said, âSorry, but we just served our last bottle of that wine. Our sommelierââ

(How he loved that!)

ââsaid as how you might enjoy this in its place.â She turned the bottle so that he could peruse the label. âNot so pricey, neither.â She was delighted to give him this information.

It bore no resemblance to the Vosne (at least as he imagined that noble wine).

âThis is a Beaujolais,â he replied, in good humor. Surely, he could outwit this raw country girl!

She stood there with her bright face beaming. âChef thought it would complement your dish, betterân that other one, anyway.â

Across the table, Henry stuck his thumb in his waistcoat pocket and laughed.

âPerhaps it would complement it, but I prefer the insult of a Vosne RomanÃ©e.â Melrose opened the wine list, which she had not collected, drummed his fingers on it and hit on the next least-likely bottle. âHow about the Musigny? The Grand Cru?â

âIâll see, sir.â She breezed off with her bottle of plonk and her self-assurance.

Melrose grew quite merry. He was in for an evening of deceit, evasion, and manipulation.

Henry had to comment, of course: *Iâd be happy to wager ten guineas that she wins round two.* With this he drew out his worn leather billfold and slapped a note on the table.

Melrose was astounded at this profligacy. *You donât seriously think this place is going to have the Musigny?*

Oh, but they donât have to have it. Thatâs the point, isnât it? Henry smoked his cigar.

In a moment, heâs going to blow smoke rings, thought Melrose.

He did.

She was back *tout de suite.*

âOh, we *are* sorry, sirââ

We. Now it was a conspiracy!

ââbut we didnât get our delivery of the Musigny.â

As if it were brought around on a milk float!

âBut our sommelier suggests thisââ

A Mosel! He opened his mouth to object to this lunatic substitution, when she saidâ*whispered* as if it were the best-kept secret in RyeââItâs a very good year.â

Melrose looked at the label. âItâs a 1975. The musk is still wet behind the ears. Itâs a Rieslingâwhite.â

That hardly put her off. âItâs from grapes that was grown in the Mosel district.â

âSeeing itâs a Mosel, that doesnât surprise me.â

âOn the *south* slope. Above the river.â

âWhat river?â

âWhy, the Moselle, of course.â

Henry blew a smoke ring. His fingers crept toward the money.

âGermany doesnât have slopes.â Of course it did, but she didnât know that.

She laughed. âOh, you are a caution, sir.â

âActually, Iâd love a word with your sommelier.â

This earned Melrose a disappointed look from Henry. *Below the belt, dear fellow.*

âIâm sorry, sir. Heâs just this minute gone.â

Henry snickered, Melrose sighed. âJust pour.â

Henry pulled back his moneyâwith Melroseâs own two fivers on top of it.

She popped out the cork with great Ã©lan, tilted a little into his glass, and waited.

âOh, no need to bother with tasting; Iâm sure itâs as fine as can be.â

She actually looked disappointed.

So did Henry.

Melrose said to him: *Do you expect me to keep playing along with this?*

Of course. What do you think life is if not this?

Grudgingly, Melrose swirled the wine around, sniffed it, tasted it. The waitress was actually looking on expectantly as if she were really concerned.

âExcellent!â said Melrose, who had never liked Mosel.

âThank you, sir. We thought youâd approve. Anyhow, itâll go much better with the *poisson*.â She sailed off.

Henry blew smoke rings.

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Following this entertaining interlude, after the unremarkable wine and grilled fish, Melrose was prepared to return to Lamb House.

He wondered, upon entering the house and seeing his suitcase still sitting resolutely by the stairs like an abandoned and still obedient dog, if he had left it packed because he would rather go than stay.

He tossed his coat over the banister again and went into the library, where he ran a finger over the spines of the Henry James *Åuvre*. He pulled out one of the short story collections, read through the contents, looking for one of Jamesâs ghost stories. James was rather big on ghosts and Melrose wondered why, as he turned to the window and stood looking out on darkness.

It seemed an anomaly, James and ghost stories. Hadnât there been some incident about the elder James, his father, having had an experience with an apparition? And his brother William was more than a little bit interested in ghostly phenomena.

Back to the book. He found âThe Jolly Corner,â which he could read in bed. It was one of the best known; Melrose had read it years ago. This volume in hand he walked back to the entryway, picked up his suitcase, and walked upstairs.

TWENTY-FOUR

With his book still splayed beneath his hand, Melrose awoke to a morning that looked as fresh as a â75 Beaujolais Nouveau. An inept metaphor, but he would probably never recover from the previous nightâs wine list.

He heard sounds below that seemed to come from the kitchen. Cooking sounds, he hoped. He was aware that he was famished. Last nightâs meal had not hung about him for long, probably because he had expended so much energy that any supplied by the food and drink had been used up before heâd even left the restaurant. Ah! But that had been an excellent bit of cabaret, hadnât it? He relived it as he finished dressing.

He was just on his way downstairs when the door knocker sounded. Was he supposed to answer? Or was Mrs. Jessup? What was the protocolâ*Oh, who cares? Just go to the door!*

The man on the step was tall, light-haired, and with bones chiseled into handsomeness. *Very Germanic,* Melrose said to himself, aware that he did so only because he knew this manâs origins.

The man reached out his hand. âKurt Brunner. Superintendent Jury suggested I might be of some help to you in Rye. Youâre interested in the history of the area, he said.â

Far from it, thought Melrose. The last thing he wanted to do was to go hacking back through 1066 and its attendant miseries, no matter how heâd sworn last night to do precisely this. Heâd wait for the miniseries. âAh, yes! Yes, he did mention you, Mr. Brunner. Iâll be happy for your help. Shall we sit down?â Melrose motioned toward one of the armchairs in the sitting room, and took the other himself.

âIâm especially interested in the history of Lamb House. Iâm writing a monograph on Henry James.â Now why in hell did he have to add *that* bit of information? It would undoubtedly get him in hot

water later on.

Brunner wasnât interested in monographs, fortunately. âI know Lamb House well. I was, I guess youâd say, assistant to Billy Maples.â He paused. âI donât know if you know aboutââ

âHis being shot to death? Yes. The superintendent told me about it; it was in all the papers. A terrible thing.â

Mrs. Jessup appeared in the doorway at that point. âLord Ardry hasnât even had his morning tea, Mr. Brunner,â she said in a scolding voice, as if Melroseâs oversleeping were Brunnerâs fault. She was all solicitation, that is, except for the look she shot Brunnerâs way. What was in that sharp glance?

âIâm sorry,â Brunner started up.

Melrose waved him back down. âThank you, Mrs. Jessup. Perhaps we could have it now. Youâll have tea, Mr. Brunner?â

âYes, Iâd like a cup.â

âIâll just fetch it, then.â She went back to the kitchen.

âHave police made any headway?â

Brunner smiled slightly. âYou might know more than I, considering.â

Had that smile been shifty? âOh, you mean from Mr. Jury.â Melrose laughed artificially. âHe doesnât take me into his confidence.â

âAs far as I know, no oneâs been arrested.â

âNo.â Melrose paused to consider the best way to proceed. âYou said you were BillyâsâBilly Maplesâsâassistant? Iâm not sureâexactly what did that involve?â

Brunner nodded. âIt wasnât taking down letters, no. A bit of everything. Keeping track of his affairs.â

âYou mean engagements? Money things? Bills? All that?â

âYes, but I donât think that was of as much importance asââ He looked strained, as if formulating an answer required concentration. âSay, adviser.â

On the heels of that rather inscrutable statement, Mrs. Jessup came in with the tea tray, which she set on the table between them. Rather abruptly, Melrose thought. She left.

Brunner took over. âIâm not her favorite person,â he said, raising the milk jug. âMilk? Sugar?â He was, apparently, used to playing host.

âBoth. One sugar. Why is that? I mean, her feelings about you.â

Brunner shrugged. âIâm not sure. Jealousy, perhaps. She might consider Lamb House her own little fiefdom. I was in the way. And

Iâm German, of course, which doesnât help matters.â He stirred his cup.

Melrose pondered that. âYou mean, sheâs still a holdout over the war?â

âMost definitely. Some people have never gotten over the war. Wars, I should say.â

âStill, she strikes me as the motherly sort. And your employer was young andââhe tried it outââunattached.â

Here Kurt Brunner gave Melrose a look, probably wondering if he should divulge confidences, even though the confidant was dead. Or maybe even *because* he was dead.

Melrose wanted to pursue this line, but Brunner should have by now pondered why the talk was rather distant from Rye and Lamb House. Melrose merely said, âHe sounds a decent sort.â

âHe was, very.â

âInteresting that he settled here in Rye.â

âI donât think he meant to stay more than a year. He was a great fan of Henry James, I know that. I am, too.â

âAh! As for myself, Iâm doing research. Iâm writing a book on James. The middle years.â God, but how stupid of him. He didnât know the middle years from the early years from the final years from the afterlife. All he knew was that James had written his three most involved novels later in life.

âOh? I thought it was a monograph.â

Look at that. Heâd already blundered just fifteen minutes into the conversation. âOh, thatâs an extract from the whole manuscript.â

âThe middle years.â Kurt Brunner seemed to be casting around for an observation. He asked, âWhat marks that period for you? It wouldnât have been the three great novels. Those came later.â

âYouâre right.â Melrose steepled his fingers and cursed himself and tried to dredge up some memory of Jamesâs work in that period.

Then Brunner helped out by exclaiming, â*Guy Domville!* Thatâs it, isnât it? That awful debacle?â

Melrose thanked him silently for providing the work. Everyone knew about that play. âYes. The play where James was laughed off the stage. Awful. The man took an awful beating for that.â

Kurt began to laugh. âThereâs a caricature or a cartoon of James in which heâs shown in BuÃ±ol, the site of the tomatina. We went there, Billy and Iââ

âOh, youâre talking about that tomato-throwing thing? What in

Godâs name is the attraction?â

âI have no idea. You get covered with tomato pulp. Billy said heâd never touch another tomato again in any way, shape, or form. In any event, this cartoon thing of James, clearly a victim of the tomatina. The caption read, ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL RUN OF*GUY DOMVILLE*.â

Melrose laughed. âPoor man.â

âBut he took that blasting and came out the better for it, didnât he?â

Melrose was ready to stomp all over that clichÃ©. âNo, he didnât.â

âNo?â

âWell, one doesnât, does one? One is lucky if one comes out *alive,* never mind better.â He wondered if he could crowd one more âoneâ into his observation. âOne becomes a little embittered, a little aggrieved.â God! Did he have to bring in his horse? How stuffy he sounded! Yet it might be a good pose; no one as smug and self-satisfied as Melrose would appear in Rye to investigate a murder.

âYouâre probably right.â Brunner set down his cup and asked, âWould you like to go out and walk around Rye?â

âExcellent idea!â Not really; the only walk Melrose wanted to take was a destination walk. From Ardry End to the Jack and Hammer, or across the street to the Wrennâs Nest, to annoy Theo Wrenn Browne. Or to the library, which was generally on his way to the pub, anyway, so that was two destinations for the price of one. He had heard London was a marvelous city for walking, people were always exclaiming over green expanses such as Kew, but he wouldnât know. Once he established himself in Boringâs, that was London enough for him. The Boringâs clientele was as frozen in place as the planets, as fixed as plumbing.

But this morning, he shrugged on his coat and he and Kurt Brunner set off.

It sounded absolutely Victorian.

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âHow much do you know about Rye?â

Nothing. âOh, quite a bit, I mean Iâm familiar with its history and all. You know, the Battle of Hastingsâwell, thatâs not Rye, exactly; itâs one of the Cinque Ports. Iâve a friend who insists itâs not five, but seven.â Melrose laughed. âIn spite of its being *cinque,* correct? She claims there are two towns thrown in. Extra.â

âSheâs right.â

Melrose stopped dead. âRight?â

Kurt smiled. âI believe itâs formally called Cinque Ports and Two Ancient Towns. The towns I think are Winchelsea and Rye. They were, in medieval times, a maritime corporation. Very important because the confederation was responsible for naval defense.â

âIâll be damned.â

They started walking again.

They had set their walk toward the High Street and had turned off onto a cliff road. There was a sort of terrace with a telescope, a pleasant stop for tourists, who with the aid of the telescope could seeâKurt told himâto Dungeness and the cliffs of Dover. They looked out over the Town Salts toward the river. The area appeared to be a multiuse place where children could play, cars could park. Within it were pools of water, one or two the size of small lakes. It must have been bird heaven. There were fishing boats in the distance; beyond was the Rother.

âThe Salts: itâs hard to believe all that was covered by the sea a hundred years ago. Thereâs a footpath down there. Billy walked there often. There are several bird hides, if youâre a bird-watcher.â

Melrose shook his head. âIf they fly into the Lamb House garden, Iâll be happy to watch them. But Iâve never understood the pleasure of standing around at dawn in wet grass or in a drafty box waiting for a glimpse of the copper-throated plover.â

âI donât know that bird. Farther away over there is the nature preserve. That stretch of water is called Castle Water. Itâs beside Camber Castle.â The sun made the water blaze.

âAll of this was created by the seaâs pulling back?â said Melrose. âIt seems strange, doesnât it? The sea is usually what moves in and claims a place.â Thinking of the best way to proceed about Billy Maples, Melrose drew out his cigarette case. He didnât want to appear too curious. âYour little description of Billy is surprising. I got the impression from Mrs. Jessup there never was much on Billyâs mind. Rather, he was a bit of a playboy. If that arcane expression fits. She thinks himâthought himârather spoiled.â

âBy what, I wonder? By whom? His parents? I seriously doubt it. Billyâs problem was that he was scattered. His focus didnât last long. But when it was there, it was there. He was quite intense.â

âDo you think he focused on the wrong thing and it got him killed?â

âWhat do you mean?â

âWhy, Iâve no idea. I know as much about Billy Maples as about the copper-throated plover.â

Kurt laughed again.

âBilly was fascinated, perhaps morbidly so, by the war. I mean World War Two. He liked to go over to Lambeth to the Imperial War Museum. And since I had been a child in Berlin during the war, he asked me endless questions about it. I was a little kid, I was three or four and told him I just didnât recall much. He wanted to knowâah, we were Jews, you see; my parents both died in Auschwitz. Billy thought I must have come out of the war terribly angry and bitter and wanting revenge.â

Melrose was taken aback by Kurt Brunnerâs carelessly offering a motive for murder. âRevenge? You mean for your real or imagined mistreatment?â

âIt wouldnât have to be that personal, would it?â

He turned from the shingle and the blazing water and stood looking at the street and the little buildings snugly fitted against one another. The street was filled with shadows.

âIt would probably be part of the reason Mrs. Jessup is not very fond of me. Her family had a hard time of it during the war.â

âShe wasnât alone in that regard.â

âNo, but two of her sisters died in some evacuation attempt.â

Melrose wanted to steer the conversation away from the cook and back to Billy.

They were walking again along East Cliff Street.

âWhy would such a young man want to sequester himself in the world of Henry James?â

âOh, I donât think it was that world. Though he did have a strong liking for Jamesâs books. I think it was a bit of a lark, for one thing. Billy usually had a hundred reasons for things he did. It just so happened that the National Trust was looking for a stopgap, someone to take on Lamb House for a year. Until they could get things sorted. Well, Billy heard about it and thought it would be interesting. That, and a dare.â Kurt smiled.

âA dare?â

âHis fiancÃ©e told him he wouldnât last twenty-four hours in Rye. I think Billy was offended to be thought so city bound, to be thought, well, shallow in that he couldnât manage this solitude because he had no inner resources.â

Melrose flung out his arm as they passed the well-lit and well-attended Mermaid Tavern. âThis is scarcely solitude!â

âNo, not if youâre inside it. Iâve walked this street time and again. Every time Iâve felt the quiet seep into my bones. The silence seems palpable. In winter when the fog rolls in or the mist covers the ground and you canât see your feetâitâs all very isolating. Rye is like one of those places we wander into in dreams.â

âI wonder how much of his work he composed walking these streets. Henry James, I mean.â

âVery little is my guess. I see James as an indoor man when it came to writing.â

âDid Billy want to write himself?â

âNo, or at least I donât think so.â

âIâm assuming you knew him well.â

âAs much as anybody did. Perhaps better.â

âThat implies that he was unknowable, eh? A bit of a mystery.â

Kurt stopped on the pavement and so Melrose did, too, and he became aware that their footsteps had been all there was to hear.

âOh, everyoneâs *that,*â said Brunner.

âThat soundsâ¦you sound like one of Jamesâs characters. You know, his characters sound to me as if theyâre always pausing to catch breath.â

Kurt Brunner laughed. âIâll have to watch it. Perhaps anyone who lives in that house for a while begins to sound like a page out of James. Even Mrs. Jessup might come off sounding like the malevolent Miss Jessel one of these days.â

âGood lord, I hope not!â

They had reached Lion Street and were soon to come to St. Maryâs Church. âWas Billyââ

Melrose stopped.

âWhat?â

âI never knew him and yet I call him Billy.â

âEveryone did,â Brunner said, sadly.

Melrose smiled. âEveryone did, but why?â

âI never thought about it. But what had you been about to ask?â

âI donât remember.â

They walked on.

TWENTY-FIVE

Malcolm Mott was standing in the front garden with his dog, Waldo, when the car came up the long drive.

Whoâs this lot, then? he wondered.

The car pulled up. The men, driver and passenger, got out. The driver, thinner and shorter than the other one, called over. âAfternoon, young man.â

Young man. How smarmy. Malcolm didnât respond. The passenger, the taller and smarter-looking one, didnât address Malcolm at all. He merely looked at him. This annoyed Malcolm as it made placing him in the scheme of failed adults difficult. The tall man folded his arms and leaned against the car as if he could stop there all day.

The driver had come up to him now, smiling and showing Malcolm some sort of identification. âWeâre from New Scotland Yard CID. Iâm Detective Sergeant Wiggins and that gentlemanââhe turned to the other oneââis Superintendent Richard Jury.â

Blimey!

To keep the excitement out of his face, he reached down and picked up Waldo, who clearly didnât want to be carried. Malcolm chewed his gum more ferociously. He was having a really hard time holding himself in check. Not only because this was Scotland Yard come to visit, but because they must be here about Billy.

Malcolm clutched Waldo tighter. He was holding off thoughts about Billy. When that other policeman had come, Malcolm had just gone out to the back garden and started scaling the wall, tying his dog to the end of the rope for a kind of balance.

Now the taller one was standing in front of him.

âYouâre Malcolm.â

And was a mind reader. This was bad. This person could be dangerous. Malcolm mustered his most ferocious look. He clapped his

eyebrows together and gave the both of them a thunderous stare. Rain clouds gathering, ice shards spitting, lightning boltingâ*lightning bolting?* Malcolm frowned, but at himself this time; that didnât sound right. Lightning ripping, lightning stabbing, lightningâ¦Malcolm was writing a book, and he meant it to be terrifying. A lot of weather was in it.

âAre your mum and dad here, young Malcolm?â asked the thin one.

Malcolm wanted to just haul off and hit him. *Young Malcolm.* He stared at them. He hoped Waldo was staring, too.

âMalcolm,â said the one who claimed to be a Sergeant Wiggins, âweâre here about Billy Maples. Your cousin?â

As if heâd forgotten. Malcolm grew rigid with a kind of cold rage. No one talked to him about Billy.

âI expect a good friend.â The tall one smiled.

Fucking mind reader! Malcolm turned and stomped away.

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Jury watched him disappear around the corner of the house.

âYouâd think,â said Wiggins, âheâd be interested in Scotland Yard, wouldnât you?â

âHe is.â

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The door was opened by a maid in black. She was thin, young, and unhappy looking.

When Jury identified himself and Wiggins and said he was expected, she whispered for them to step inside and went off on softly soled shoes to inform her employers.

There was the sort of hush that hangs over a place when everyone whoâd lived there had gone. The silence of abandonment. The paintings, the bronze statue of the child bent over her cat, the statues in niches along the wall: all of these gave the impression of a sadness that might disperse if they could just find themselves somewhere else. If they could just go.

While Wiggins examined the bronze statue, Jury looked at a large paintingânearly four by six feet it had to beâby an artist he knew but whose name escaped him, a name by virtue of being nearly all consonants, hard to remember and hard to say: Klp, Klt, noâKlimt, that was it. Jury frowned. But a Klimt would be worth a small fortune,

wouldnât it? He looked at the frame. Perhaps that was why it was bolted to the wall; it would certainly discourage theft. The background was all gold, a membrane of gold against which the gown of the figure fidgeted in arithmetical shapes: triangles, squares, rectangles, bars, and circles. They were like bits of paper that flash around in a cage ready for the winning ticket to be drawn. Gold and copper squares, bars of black, slivers of gray and green tossed helter-skelter at the canvas. They formed, when the eye brought them under control, a bright gown on the figure of the black-haired woman before dissolving into the thin layer of gold one finds occasionally on an elaborate Indian dessert, edible and strange.

The maid came out of the room she had stepped into and motioned for them to come along.

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Roderick Maples was the only other occupant of the room. He stood before a dying fire, poker in hand, with which he apparently had been rousting the flames. He bore as little resemblance to Sir Oswald Maples as a son could to a fatherâbut why was Jury looking for resemblance? Jury remembered that Oswald was not the manâs actual father. His rangy body, his flint gray eyes, his demeanorâunsmiling and unwelcoming.

âI fail to see, Mr., ah, Jury, is it?â

Roderick Maples knew of course it was Mr. Jury and also knew Mr. Jury was a CID superintendent. Jury didnât really begrudge the man his defenses. He said, âIt is. With Detective Sergeant Wiggins.â

âI fail to see why itâs necessary to send yet more police here about my sonâs death.â

He said this stonily and looked as if he had all the malleable warmth of the poker that he had returned to the fireplace tools suspended from an antique brass holder.

Jury said, âMay we sit down?â

âWhat? Oh, yes. Yes, of course. Sit anywhere,â he said.

Jury wanted to laugh. The man made the room sound like a restaurant in its slack period. They sat down, Jury in a gray watered silk chair, facing Roderick and the fireplace. Beside the marble mantel hung another small painting by an artist Jury wasnât familiar with, though it reminded him of a van Gogh. Something about the brush work.

Wiggins had taken a seat on an acid green chair. Roderick Maples

remained standing before the marble fireplace in the manner of one who meant to make an early exit.

Roderick said, âI can tell you only what I told the other oneââ

Annoyed, Wiggins interjected, âWe assume you mean Detective Sergeant Chilten?â

Maples gave a frigid little nod. âI can tell you only that.â

âThen tell us,â said Jury.

âThe last time I saw my son was over a week ago when I went up to London to visit him at his Sloane Street flat.â

âWhat was that about?â

âI beg your pardon?â

âWhat did you want to see him about?â Jury said.

Roderick clasped his hands behind his back as if warming them before the fire, which had all but gone out. âThat has nothing at all to do with his death.â

âPerhaps it does, though. If it was important enough to pay him a visit.â

Roderick flinched and his expression grew stonier. âYou officersââ

âDetectives, actually. CID.â

ââappear to think that oneâs life must be an open book set before you.â

Jury smiled at the accurate description. âThatâs about right, Mr. Maples. So, again, what did you go up to London to see your son about?â

âThe matter of his trust fund. Billy was utterly profligate with money. I wanted to know why.â

âWhat was the trust fund? I mean, who left it to him?â

âHis mother, my first wife. Actually, there were two. The other came from his grandfather.â

âSir Oswald Maples?â

âNo, not my father, his other grandfather. His name was Ames. James Ames. His wife is still alive, lives in Fulham, is it? Chelsea, perhaps.â

âSo you confronted your son. How did he react?â

âTo say that it was his money and heâd spend it as he liked. The young have no sense of responsibility.â

Wiggins said, âYour son was in his thirties. Not really one of âthe youngâ as you put it.â

Roderick tented his fingers and looked at them from the posture of the long-suffering.

Jury said, âI understand your son gave large amounts of money to help artists. His friends, the art gallery he supported. He was, according to others, very generous.â

âHe was mercurial, I know that.â Roderick crossed to the silver tray that held the soda siphon and splashed more soda into his glass.

âIn what way, sir?â asked Wiggins.

âWell, very moody. He spent little time here. To tell the truth, we didnât get on so well together. But I already said that, didnât I? But he did appear to like his grandfather. He lives in Chelsea.â

Jury said, âI know him, Sir Oswald Maples.â

Roderick looked at Jury in surprise. âMy father? You mean youâve already talked to him?â

âI have, but what I meant is that I knew him before all this. He was very helpful in a case I worked on last year. He was at Bletchley Park, as you know, of course. He must have a first-rate mind to have been involved in all of that code breaking.â

âYes. Yes, Dadâs quite brilliant, really.â

This seemed to be said in an affectionate way, which surprised Jury. âIt was he who asked me to investigate your sonâs murder. The other detectives who were here were from Islington police.â

âYes. The one in charge was a woman. Rather aggressive, I thought, but extremely perceptive. I believe she could read my mind.â

You donât know the half of it. Jury cleared his throat.

Roderick laughed a little, then abruptly stopped. âNot the most comfortable state of affairs, I mean, if youâre talking to the police.â He laughed again.

Jury warmed to him a little.

Roderick had been standing with his back to the fireplace during this exchange. âI think Dad knew Billy better than I did.â

In this Jury detected a hint of regret, sadness even. âHe said Billy came to see him often.â

âYes. More than I did, certainly. Iâve been very derelict on that score. I would imagine that if anyone knew anything it would be my father.â

âI donât believe he knows any more than you do, Mr. Maples.â Jury wasnât altogether sure why he said this. It was some attempt at solace, maybe, as a parent rather hates to think heâs the last to know whatâs going on in his childâs life. âWe hoped to speak with Mrs. Maples. Is she about?â

âUpstairs. Itâs all been hard for her to take.â

As he made no move to get her, Jury said, âCould we see her? Itâs important.â

Distractedly, Roderick looked at Jury, said, âOh. Oh, yes. Iâll tell her to come down.â

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The woman who entered the room was a good dozen years younger than her husband, which didnât make her youngâsay, early to midforties. Her dress was a green so dark it was almost black. Black for mourning is what Jury had first thought it was. The neckline of the dress was a sort of drape fastened at the shoulder with an amethyst brooch. Her good looks were authoritative.

âMrs. Maples.â Jury had risen. âIâm terribly sorry but weâve come about your stepson.â

She nodded and took the mate of the chair Jury sat on. âMy stepson, but he was like a son.â

Roderickâs expression suggested otherwise, but what other?

She sounded, Jury thought, sincere when she said this. âWould you say you knew Billy well?â

âBetter than Roddy, I think.â She offered her husband a fleeting smile, but whether it was by way of apology or needling, it was hard to say. And Jury didnât believe her for a minute.

Roderick sat down. Apparently, he preferred to take her answers that way.

Jury wondered if the money that had furnished this handsome room was his or hers or even the first wifeâs, Billyâs real motherâs. Perhaps Roderick had been lucky in marrying two wealthy women.

âAnd how well is that, madame?â asked Wiggins with some acerbity. His patience didnât cover people being clever.

Her glance slid off Wiggins; her answer was for Jury. âI knew Billy quite well.â

âIf thatâs so, have you some insight into what happened?â

She sat back. âNo. There Iâm as much in the dark as the rest of you.â The way her look traveled around the small circle of people in the room suggested that even her ignorance could compete favorably with theirs. âI doubt anyone knows what happened.â

âThe murderer does.â Wiggins, again, a smile tilting on his face.

Jury said, âThen you donât know if Billy had enemies?â

She did not immediately dismiss this. âWell, there were one or two.â

Roderick stepped in. âWhat are you saying, Olivia? The boy never made enemies.â

âDonât be silly, Roddy. *Everyone* has an enemy. Iâm thinking of the woman in London, whom heâd been seeing for some time. He broke up with her. Dumped her, you could say.â

âRidiculous,â said Roderick. âSheâd hardly have gone to a Clerkenwell hotel and *shot* him.â

Jury smiled inwardly. The Ritz, perhaps; Brownâs or the Connaught. Mayfair, but not Clerkenwell. He said, âThe thing is, Mrs. Maples, the scene itself is strange. He checked into this trendy Clerkenwell hotel, the Zetter. Then after his visit to the Melville Gallery, he stopped in at a club called Dust. He then went back to the Zetter and ordered a meal be sent up. Coffee for two to be delivered later. He was expecting someone to join him.â

She asked, âCouldnât he have met someone at the gallery who joined him later, or at this club?â

Roderick said, âBut then why didnât this person simply go back with him to the hotel?â

âA good question. Who,â Jury said to Olivia Maples, âwas the second person. You said one or two possible enemies.â

She plucked at the brooch on her shoulder, straightening it. âI was thinking of Kurt Brunner.â

âBrunner? His assistant?â

âOr whatever he is. Was. I have never trusted him.â

Wiggins asked, âWhy is that, Mrs. Maples?â

âIâm not sure he always had Billyâs best interests at heart.â

âOh, for Godâs sakes, Olivia. Kurtâs perfectly okay.â

Anger sparked in her eyes. âWhy would a man as worldly as Kurt find it rewarding to be at the beck and call of a rich young man who never worked a day in his life?â

âThatâs not true.â

Olivia shook her head, ostensibly at Rodericksâ thickheadednessâor at his perennial blind spot, his son. She turned back to Jury. âWould you like something? Whiskey? Tea?â

Jury knew the mention of tea would bring Wiggins to full alert, so he said, âTea would be welcome, thanks.â

Wiggins, whoâd been looking gloomy, beamed. âIt would, yes.â

Olivia rose. âIâll just tell Margaret to fetch it.â She left the room.

Roderick watched her go.

Jury said, âIâve been looking at that painting by the mantel.

Whose is it?â

âThat? Thatâs a Soutine. That and the Klimt in the entryâdid you see it?â

âAbsolutely. Itâs remarkable. But very valuable, isnât it?â

Roderick smiled a little purse-lipped smile. âI wish it were. Itâs not the original. Nor is this one. But theyâre remarkably good reproductions.â They both studied the Soutine. It looked stormy with its thick-branched bending trees in the foreground. Behind them was a sturdy, crenellated house. â*Schloss Moser.* Austria, I think.â

Roderick sat forward and brought the subject back. âSuperintendent, my wifeâs suspicions of Brunner are completely unfounded. I think Billy was better for his association with Kurt Brunner.â

âBetter than what?â

Roderick grimaced and shrugged, as if he could shrug it away: âBilly could be a holy terror.â

Olivia was back on the heels of that comment. âBilly a holy *terror?* Stop exaggerating, Roderick.â To Wiggins, she said, âTea will be just a moment.â Then picking up the comment about her stepson, said, âHe could be moody at times, thatâs all. Usually Billy was a lamb.â

They were probably both right. Jury would come back to that.

âYou said you questioned Brunnerâs influence. What exactly was his field before he came to work for Billy?â

Olivia shrugged, finished with the matter.

Roderick said, âHe was a teacher. Taught at a public school in Berlin? Or at least the German equivalent of public school.â

Wiggins, whoâd been glancing at the door through which the tea would make its entrance, was rewarded. There was the rattle of a tea tray carried by Margaret. She set it down. Olivia thanked her and set about pouring.

Jury accepted the cup from Olivia together with whatever combination of sugar and milk sheâd added.

âHe taught European history, he said,â Roderick went on. âWhat he seemed really interested in was the Russian dynasties. Czar Nicholas, that period. He was fascinated by Rasputin.â

Wiggins said, âWasnât Rasputin the one that got shot, poisoned, stabbed, and still didnât die?â

Roderick laughed. âAnd one or two others, Sergeant, if I remember rightly.â

Jury thought about Rasputinâs hold over Czarina Alexandra. âHe

taught in a public school?â

âOne of the international schools that are everywhere, it seems. Heâd dropped the teaching even before he started working for Billy. I think he has very little life of his own.â

Not a social life, thought Jury. *But there was an interior life that could make up for it.*

Jury said, âYouâre suspicious of Kurt Brunner, Mrs. Maples. What would have been his motive for killing Billy?â

âBillyâs fortune. It was considerable.â

âBut they met by accident.â

âFor heavenâs sakes! One can meet by accident and carry on by design.â

âTrue.â Jury smiled. âBut why would your stepson leave the fortune to Brunner?â

âWell, there really arenât many candidates,â said Roderick. âAnyway, this is all beside the point since Billy left no will.â

âHe died intestate, then.â

Roderick nodded. âA shame really.â

âThe boy outside, is he your nephew?â

âOliviaâs actually.â He seemed happy to wipe Malcolm off his own slate. âHeâs the son of Oliviaâs sister, Julia Mott, who dumped him on us and went on to pursue her own interests: drugs, sex, and gambling. Weâve not seen her since.â

Jury said, âNot terribly happy, is he? He doesnât bother to make himself liked.â

Olivia laughed. âHeâs wretched. But Billy got on with him. I think Billy was Malcolmâs hero, if the child had one. Billy had him up to London several times. Took him places.â

âBut,â said Jury, âthat was very kind of your son.â

âIt was that other side of Billy. He could be a very caring boy.â Roderick quickly rose and went to the window overlooking the front of the house.

âIâm very sorry for your loss.â

Roderick brushed his handkerchief across his face, returned it to his pocket, turned around. âYes. Thank you.â

âSergeant Chilten and I went to your sonâs flat in Chelsea. We were looking for some clue as to what was going on in his life. There was nothing definitive. But I wonder, did he have a religious bent?â

They both looked surprised. âHeavens, no. We could never manage to get him to church with us,â said Olivia.

âNot that we go that often,â said Roderick.

âDid he ever bring his girlfriendâor fiancÃ©eâhere?â

Olivia laughed. âFiancÃ©e? Well, thatâs probably wishful thinking on the poor girlâs part. Billy enjoyed playing the field.â

âBut when it came to it,â said Roderick, âhe didnât stick, no, he managed to get himself out of it. Too damned satisfied with his bachelor ways.â

Jury thought about this. He thought about Kurt Brunner, about Angela Riffley, about the supposed assignation at the Zetter, which was hardly two minutesâ walk from Dust. Dust, with its glowing lights, its reckless music, its old brick walls and dark corners. Dust would have encouraged an assignation.

âIf you donât mind, I think Iâll have a word with Malcolm.â

âOh? Well, if you want. Heâll be outside somewhere, probably the back garden,â said Olivia.

As he rose to go, still thinking of that supposed meeting at the Zetter, he asked, âWas Billy gay?â

Both of them froze. Could people still look out in horror at the suggestion? Olivia and Roderick both did.

Then Olivia laughed, uncertainly. âSuperintendent, weâve just been talking about his girlfriends. You should have seen the trail of broken hearts Billy left in his wake! Gay?â

âThatâll do it,â Jury said.

TWENTY-SIX

âWho wants to know?â Malcolm Mott said when Jury asked him if he and Billy were friends.

âSame person who wanted to know before. Me.â They were standing near the brick wall at the rear of the gardens, which were quite extensive.

âWell.â Malcolmâs tone was uncertain.

âWhy are you tying your dog up that way?â

By Malcolmâs feet, the little terrier sat, looking less than pleased. Jury could only have called it a scowl.

âHis nameâs Waldo. Weâre going rappelling.â

âWaldo doesnât look much like he wants to rappel.â

âHeâs done it before.â

âHe probably didnât want to before, either.â

Malcolm stopped pulling the rope around the dog and looked up at Jury. âYouâd do better to mind your own business.â

âIt is my business.â Jury gave Malcolm another look at his ID. âEverythingâs my business.â

With as much sarcasm as he could muster, Malcolm said, âWhoâre you, then, God?â

âThe next best thing. Scotland Yard.â

Malcolm stopped tying the rope around Waldoâs midsection. âIf you came to ask questions about Billy, well, donât.â

âWhy?â

â*Because.* Thatâs why not.â

âI wonder why, though.â

âWonder away. Us, weâre going over that wall.â He picked up Waldo, who barked, but seemed to be doing it more at Jury than the wall.

âIâve got a better idea.â

Malcolm made a derisive sound, but he turned to hear it. âWhat?â

âIâll take Waldoâs place.â

That stopped Malcolm right in his tracks. â*You?* Donât make me laugh!â

âOf course, I can understand you wouldnât want to, as Iâd get over it quicker than you. I mean if there was to be a contest, Iâd win. Hands down.â

Frowning deeply, Malcolm set Waldo down. The dog went round in circles, involving himself even more in the rope. Hands on hips, Malcolm looked at Jury. âYou must be daft. Youâd never beat me. Youâd never even get over it. Youâre too big. Me, Iâm light as a feather.â

Jury shrugged. âThatâs what you say.â

Malcolm started fake laughing.

âI guess,â said Jury. âYouâre not used to competing for things.â Jury actually guessed just the opposite.

Malcolm stopped the laughing and glared. âThatâs stupid. Not even Billy couldââ He clamped his mouth shut, clearly upset over relaying this smidgen of information.

âBilly climbed with you, did he?â

âYeah, if you have to know.â

Waldo, unused to all of this talk and dangling his rope, looked interested.

âI want to.â Jury reached down to rub the dogâs head. âYou mean Billy never beat you? He must notâve been as good as me, then.â

That reeled him in. âOh, yes he was! He was betterân you! Betterân youâll ever be!â

âNow just how would you know that? Youâve never seen me rappel.â

Malcolmâs face was a cloud of uncertainty. He sputtered, âOkay, okay, weâll just see. Hold on, Waldo.â He started untwining the length of rope Waldo hadnât managed to get free of. When heâd freed the dog, he said to it, âDonât you go off anyplace, Waldo.â

Waldo quickly went off someplace.

âYou gotta put this round your waist and under your arms.â He held out the rope.

Jury doffed his coat and ran the rope around himself in poor imitation of what an experienced climber would do. âIsnât it supposed to go over your shoulder?â

Malcolm heaved a sigh. âYouâre already trying to change the

rules.â

âNo, I just think the ropeâs supposed to go under and over.â Jury slid it beneath his thigh and over his shoulder. âThatâs how a real mountain climber would do it.â

âLookââ Malcolm had a really hard time staring Jury down, as he had to look up so far. âItâs not mountain climbing anyway. Itâs rappelling.â

âThatâs coming down, rappelling.â

âNo, it is *not*. But go ahead, put the rope anywhere. I wonât care when you fall down and break your head.â

âOkay. Which part of the wall?â

Malcolm pointed. âThere.â

An old garden wall, red brick perhaps fifteen feet high. The faded brick seemed almost soft to the touch. There were possible finger-or toeholds, places where the stone had crumbled away.

âOkay, letâs go,â said Jury.

Malcolm began squirming up the wall. He was moving fast. As Jury was so much taller, he gave the boy a head start. It took only two or three lurches and Jury was at the top.

Malcolm, of course, won. He sat on the wall beaming. Light gathered in his face.

âYou win, I guess,â said Jury, hitching himself around to sit down.

âSure,â said Malcolm.

The view from the top of the wall was pretty impressive. They could see beyond the front of the house north to what might have been Kent; there was a line of oasthouses along the horizon. Behind them was the weal and Romney Marsh. In the late afternoon sun, the marsh almost glowed.

âSome view,â Jury said.

âYeah. I sit up here a lot. With Waldo.â

âDoes Waldo know where the toeholds are?â

That got him a look. âDonât be daft. I pull him up. You saw.â

Jury wished he had a cigarette, which was also daft.

âYou can see to London,â said Malcolm.

You couldnât, but Jury squinted as if he could and agreed that the tiny spire in the distance might be Westminster or the Houses of Parliament.

âIâm going there to live.â Malcolm stopped and dropped his head. âI mean I *was* going there.â

There are times you prompt and times you donât.

âBilly said I could when I got out of school, that I could live with him. But now, I canât.â

Jury considered. âYou still can go and live in his flat. It would be something like having him around, with all of his things there. I was there before. Itâs a nice flat. A lot of books and things.â

Malcolm showed he was interested in this possible development. But he concluded, âNah. Theyâd never let me.â

âWell, maybe they wonât have a say in it. If you were good friendsââ

âWe were! We were best friends! He didnât much like coming here. He never got on with Aunt Olivia. Sheâs his stepmother, not his real one.â

âWhy didnât he like her?â

âSheâs always nattering on about something. He said she made it hard to breathe.â

Jury thought this over. âDid you visit Billy in London?â

âA lot of times.â

âDid you go round to see stuff? The Tower and Madame Tussaudâs?â

A wind had come up and Malcolm scraped his straight brown hair back from his forehead. âWe went to museums. We went to the Natural History and the Victoria and Albert. And the War Museum.â

âThe Imperial War Museum in Lambeth?â

âUh-huh. Billy was really interested in the war. I mean the world war when his granddad did all of that secret stuff. That was cool. Codes and stuff. Anyway, Billy was fascinated by it. He really liked his granddad. He said he was about the only person worth talking to. I mean, besides me.â

Jury smiled and made a mental note to tell Sir Oswald what Malcolm said.

âWe went to art galleries sometimes. Mostly to that Tate one.â

âThe Tate Modern?â

âNo, the other one, the real one.â

âThe Tate Britain.â The real one; Jury liked that.

âYeah. Billy liked looking at certain paintings there.â

âWhich ones?â

âThat painter with a lot of initials in his name that liked a lot of light in his stuff.â

Jury thought about this. âJ.M.W. Turner?â

âYeah.â Malcolm looked at him with a new respect. âThen others

like the paintings in the houseââ He stopped and continued again. âBilly told me stuff that I wasnât to tell anyone.â He paused and gave Jury an assessing look.

âDid he? You know, there are times when I think Iâd rather not know a secret. Secrets can be a burden.â

âYeah. Only now, heâs dead. It makes me wonder.â

âAbout what?â

Malcolm was running his hand over the brick, which must have felt comfortingly abrasive, as if he were trying to shed something. Dead skin, secrets. âWhat I wonder is if what he knew had to do with itâyou know, him getting shot. If maybe I should have told somebodyââ He looked away.

Jury put a hand on his shoulder, which Malcolm predictably tried to shrug off, but Jury kept it there. âYou did exactly the right thing, kept a secret. There was no way of knowing what would happen. Anyway, what he told you probably had nothing to do with his death.â

âMaybe not, but you donât know what he told me.â Malcolm gave Jury another look, up and down, as if measuring him for a suit. âItâs about those paintings, the big one in the entryway and the little one by the fireplace. Ones that werenât there when I came. Over a year ago. I mean theyâre probably not family heirlooms, or anything.â

âI saw those, yes. Theyâre quite astonishing reproductions.â

âBut see, this is what Billy told me: theyâre not copies. Thatâs what they tell people, but itâs a lie. Theyâre the actual paintings.â

Jury looked at him, truly amazed. âBut why?â

Malcolm seemed happy with this one-up on a Scotland Yard detective. âThatâs what *I* said. Billy said he wasnât sure; he was tracking their provence.â

âProvenence. Their history, their ownership.â

âWell, *I* said maybe itâs because if people knew they were real, somebodyâd try to steal them.â

âThatâs a good guess, Malcolm. What did Billy say to that?â

âThat there was another reason. But he wasnât sure about it.â

âHow did Billy know the paintings were originals?â

âWell, one day he came here with this lady. She knew a lot about art. She knows the difference between a real painting and a copy. She told him. I heard them talking about her later, saying she was his girlfriend, but I donât see how she could be because she was old. Like forty or more. Billy was only thirty-two, so I donât think so.â

âWhen was this, Malcolm, when the lady came with Billy?â

âLast year. Maybe this time last year.â

âAre we quite ready to go, sir?â

Wigginsâs voice, down below, was accusatory. Jury looked across the garden. Wiggins must have come from the kitchen. He stood, hands on hips, looking much like Malcolm had looked before.

Jury said to Malcolm, âMy sergeant. I expect weâd better rappel down.â

TWENTY-SEVEN

They were stuffed into a smallish booth at a Happy Eater, whose bright carrot colors were enough to make the blind see. Wiggins had complained that they had not had lunch, and that tea had not really fortified him for the rest of the afternoon.

âYou,â said Wiggins, shoveling down his beans on toast, âwere out there for a goodish half an hour.â

âAnd you were in the kitchen for the same amount of time. I hope you used it wisely.â Jury ate his eggs.

âI did. The cook was quite nice, gave me more tea and a slice of her apple cake.â

This would be, for Wiggins, using the time wisely.

He went on: âApparently, Roderick is pleasant enough, but the lady of the house is a right harridan. Margaretâthatâs the maidâgot a real dressing-down the other day for using her duster on the frames of the paintings.â

Jury frowned. âWhy would that merit a dressing-down?â

ââTheyâs to be touched by no one but me and my husband.ââ Wiggins fluted, mimicking the little maid.

Jury thought about this. âBilly was very much interested in art, to the tune of subsidizing it. There are two paintings in that house Malcolm says werenât always there, that were acquired perhaps a year ago. That strikes me as strange.â

âWhy?â Wiggins sipped what was probably his hundredth cup for the day. âYou could go out and buy two paintings at the same time if you wanted.â

âItâs not exactly like bed linen, sets of sheets. You wouldnât be trying to match up two walls, now, would you? They might have come from the same source.â

Wiggins shrugged again.

âBilly was tracing their provenance, so something struck him as strange, too. Find out about them and where they were acquired, if possible.â

âYes, boss.â He sounded doubtful. âBut if theyâre reproductions, well, there wouldnât really be anything, would there?â

âThatâs the point. Malcolm says Billy told him they werenât; theyâre the genuine article.â

âA *Klimt*? But thatâs worth pots of money, isnât it?â

âYes.â

Then Wiggins returned to bemoaning the fate of the Happy Eater chain, which was to be shut down and turned into Burger Kings and more Little Chefs. He had nothing against Little Chefs as such, but nothing could drag him into a Burger King.

Jury had been forced to follow the Happy Eatersâ demise because Wiggins talked about it whenever they got on the road. âWell, theyâre all owned, these motorway rest stops and A-road cafÃ©s, by Trust House Forte, arenât they?â

âProbably, but can you imagine a Burger King in place of this?â Wiggins swept his arm outward and very nearly knocked over the young waitress with her tray whoâd come with fresh coffee. Wiggins apologized; she only smiled and poured.

As she padded away on rubber-soled trainers, Wiggins continued: âTheyâre closing them down because, they say, Happy Eaters attract the gray-haired lot. Theyâre after a different demographic.â

âPlease donât talk like a television presenter. âGray-haired lotâ? That surprises me because I thought there was never anyone over six in Happy Eaters except for you and me.â He looked at the childrenâs play area, which was quite crowded even at this off-hour of three. The kiddies were having a marvelous time.

âWell, itâs nice for the kiddies. Parents, too.â

âGrandparents. The gray-haired lot.â

Wiggins regarded him glumly. âSo I guess youâd be just as happy at a Burger King.â

âWiggins, Iâd be just as happy under the table. I know the demise of the Happy Eater is a historical event no less important than the Battle of Hastings, but would you stop going on about it for a minute and tell me what you found out after I left the living room.â

Gloomily, Wiggins drank his coffee. âRoderick talked about his father. Sir Oswald. You know him.â

âI do. Heâs the only reason weâre here. What did Roderick say?â

âA lot about Sir Oswaldâs time at Bletchley Park. He said as a boyâheâd have been eight or nine thenâthat he loved knowing his dad was working on breaking codes, all very hush-hush. And this gave him a great boost in prestige around his mates. You know, the war was a giant playground for kids. Sounds weird, but there it is. They loved poking around in bombed-out buildings before they got chased off by wardens. Roderick described it as a wizard adventure. Hope and glory. All of that.â

âThat from Roderick? Iâm surprised. He didnât sound as if he had a lot of play in him. I can see how kids might take the devastation that way. But what rather surprises me is that Roderick seems proud of his father. That doesnât fit with the picture Sir Oswald painted. There was a rift between the two. Roderick seldom goes to see him.â

âAh, *that,* I bet, would have coincided with Olivia coming on the scene. Olivia clearly doesnât like Oswald. Nor he her. She pretty much puts the damper on the father-son relationship.â Wiggins pushed back his plate and crossed his arms on the table. âI think Oliviaâs one of those people who doesnât like other people having relationships sheâs not a part of or doesnât control. She couldnât control Billy Maples. He and young Malcolm were apparently close. And she dislikes Malcolm intensely. Probably as much for that reason as for him being a pain in the arse.â

âMoney doesnât seem to be a motive, for which we might be grateful. According to their solicitor, he never made a will, which means he died intestate. Itâs too bad. It means it will go to his father, who surely doesnât need it. Maybe some to Sir Oswald. But Malcolmâs too distant a relation to get anything. And Karl Brunner gets nothing because he isnât related.â

âThereâs another part of Olivia Maples that sets my teeth on edge.â

âWhat is it?â

âI think she uses people,â Wiggins said. âIâm sure she used Billy, or tried to.â

âMaybe he wouldnât let her. And that infuriated her.â

âEnough to kill him?â

âI donât know. I canât work it out.â Jury studied his coffee. âItâs that Klimt.â

TWENTY-EIGHT

âThe Sacred Fount!â exclaimed Melrose Plant, dropping into Juryâs lap the book heâd gone upstairs to get, displacing the book Jury had been looking through.

Wiggins was in the kitchen, talking with Mrs. Jessup, though the talk might have revolved more around afternoon tea than it did her former employer.

Jury looked at the book. âThat again.â

âBut youâre the one who told me about it.â

âI didnât plan on its dogging my footsteps forever. Actually, it was Kurt Brunner who told me.â

âIâm fascinated, really. Olivia Maples and the vampire theme.â

âFrankly, I canât imagine it in Olivia Maples or useful to Henry James.â Jury looked at the bookshelves for a moment. âThis is the writer who could peel the poses of social convention like an onion? The writer who could pack an entire moral universe into a look exchanged over dinner? The writer who could make rising from a chair the dead giveaway of an intimate relationship? The writerââ

âIâm impressed!â

âDonât be.â

âI didnât know you were so conversant with the work of Henry James,â said Melrose.

âIâm not. I was just reading this book while you were upstairs rooting around for this one.â He held up *The Sacred Fount.* He turned it over in his hands. âBut do you think thatâs the case here? I never knew Billy; I have to depend on what people say about him. Malcolm certainly was terrifically fond of Billy.â

âMalcolm? Whoâs Malcolm?â

âMalcolm Mott, Billyâs cousin, by marriage. Says they were best friends. Dislikes Olivia intensely. Olivia seems to be the trouble in that

family. Sheâs not that much older than Billy Maples, ten years perhaps.â

âThere they are again! The Brissendens.â

Juryâs smile was more ironic than good-natured. âYou know, this âsacred fountâ stuff is drivel.â

Melrose caught his breath, looking around the room as if the ghosts of every well-known Jamesian biographer and critic had heard and were now crowding in. âDrivel? Henry Jamesâdear Godâis drivel? â Melrose cushioned his forehead with his hand as if a migraine were on the horizon.

âDonât be so dramatic, for Godâs sakes. I didnât mean James; I meant this exchanging of youth and age. James didnât mean thatââ

âOh, you bet he did!â Melrose slapped his hands against his chair arms, rising and going to the window where he stood and wished he had a pocket watch to snap shut or pince-nez to twirl. âYouâd be surprised at what James got up to in his stories.â

Jury sighed, looking at Melrose in his velvet smoking jacket, and wondering if he was going to be sod-all use in this case.

âFor instance,â Melrose went on, âhave you ever read âThe Jolly Cornerâ?â He returned to his chair.

âNo. The only things Iâve read are *Portrait of a Lady, The Turn of theScrew,* twenty-five pages of *The Ambassadors,* and several short stories, which were pretty good. Sinister, even.â

Melrose said, âYouâre right. In âThe Jolly Cornerâ the narrator meets his own ghostâor rather, the ghost of a past he hadnât chosen. Brydon, heâs the narratorââ

âWhy are you telling me all this?â

Melrose paused. Heâd forgotten. He searched the preceding conversation and remembered: âYou said James couldnât possibly have meant that youth and age could be exchanged, one for the other, Grace Brissendenâs age for her husbandâs youth.â

âThatâs right. He didnât mean vampirism any more than Kafka meant a great big bug. Itâs only a metaphor.â

âNo, no, no, no. Unless you look at metaphor in a very special way. Neither was Kafkaâs bug a metaphor. Gregor really *was* that. LookââMelrose shoved a little chocolate dish and a pen aroundââletâs put you here, and the bug next to you.â

âNo, weâll put *you* here and the bug next to you.â

âItâs impossible to have a literary conversation with you.â

âDonât I know it. And on a different note, why are you wearing

that smoking jacket and fiddling with that cigarette holder?â Beyond the blank window the light was changing.

âWhatâs the matter with it?â Melrose spread his hands on the smoking jacket, looking down.

âNothing. Itâs a handsome ensemble. Listen: I think you should pop round to the Maplesesâ place tomorrow and see what you can find out.â

âPop round? One doesnât just drop in.â

âWell, then, get yourself invited. I have a feeling the lady of the house has a real passion for a title. Thereâs one thing I specifically want you to do: there are two paintings in that house, a Klimt and a Soutine. How much do you know about art?â

âA little more than how ants colonize. In other words, nothing.â

âYou couldnât tell an original from a reproduction?â

âOf course not, if itâs a halfway decent one. Thatâs the point, isnât it? Whoâs going to hang a reproduction that looks fake?â

âOkay. When you go there, look at the Klimt in the entry hall and the Soutine in the living room. The Klimt is bolted to the wallââ

âI shouldnât wonder! My God, thereâs a fortune there; can you imagine?â

âThatâs the whole little mystery. Theyâre reproductions, Roderick Maples told me. But according to Malcolmââ

âMalcolm again.â

âBilly told him they were originals.â

âThen whyââ

âI donât know. The Soutine, which is much smaller, is hanging beside the fireplace mantel. I want you to look at the back and see if thereâs any identifying mark.â

âOh, thatâs brilliant! I just walk over to the wall and say, âI think Iâll have thisâ? And yank it off. That should get me invited back. What do you think Iâll find?â

âI donât know. But I believe thereâs some connection between those paintings and the generosity Billy Maples showed to artists and that gallery.â

âIâll try.â Melrose got up. âLetâs creak along to dinner, shall we? Iâm feeling rather burdened by all of this.â

Jury rose. âSo was Malcolm.â

âWhat?â Melrose was getting the coats.

âGo to see them.â

TWENTY-NINE

What did he expect if he was going to pub hop with Plant but a sizable headache in the morning?

Jury tossed down a couple of aspirin with his orange juice, followed by tea so strong the cup could have walked to the telephone by itself.

Jury held the cup and went to answer it.

âWe need to talk,â said DI Aguilar.

âGood morning. You always say that and we always wind up not talking.â

She sighed. âI donât always, and we do.â

Jury smiled. It sounded like Carole-anne: the tone, the injured pride, the syntax.

âCan you meet me?â

âSure. In Piccadilly Circus.â

A brief silence her end. âIs it my fault if you canât be alone in the same room with me?â

âYes.â

âOh, for Godâs sakes. Come down to headquarters. Tolpuddle Street.â

âI know whereââ

But she had already hung up.

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She led him into one of the interrogation rooms, which made him think he knew what suspects felt, and she closed the door behind them. Noncommitally, she looked at him and opened up a file.

âThis is your doctorâs reportââ

âTechnically, Dr. Nancy isnât my doctor.â

She looked at him as one might at a deliberately obdurate child.

âPlease. Ballistics says the shot was fired from three to four feet away. Thereâs very little tattooing. The path of the bullet and the angle of the gun suggest the shooter was probably about the victimâs height.â

ââProbablyâ is the important word there.â

âI was just thinkingâ¦. You talked to Kurt Brunner?â

âI did. Two days ago, in Rye.â

âWhat conclusions did you draw? I mean, do you still think heâs the one who did it?â

âI donât know. I have to talk to him again. But there is the fact that Kurt would hardly have made an appointment to see Billy.â

âYou said that before. But it could just have been that Brunner said, âIâll see you at the Zetter later.â Thatâs not what youâd call an appointment.â

âMaybe not. Going back to the jacket, though. Billy wouldnât have kept it on to eat probably. But if he removed it and then put it back on to meet whoever was coming, it wouldnât have been Brunner, would it? Billy wouldnât have made that formal gesture for Brunner.â

âThe thing is, Brunner would probably be too tall to hold the gun at the angle described here.â

âAgain, the âprobablyâ is important. Iâll talk to Phyllis.â

Lu looked down at the pages again. âSheâs very thorough. I expect sheâs quite a good pathologist.â

âShe is.â

Keeping her eyes on the papers she was gathering back up, Lu said, âHave you known her a long time?â

âYes.â Jury waited.

âSheâs very attractive.â Still not looking at Jury, she tapped the papers on the table, evening them up.

âYes, she is.â

âIs she a very good friendâoh, itâs none of my business, anyway.â

âWhy isnât it?â

âWhat?â Her eyes widened. Clearly not the response sheâd expected.

âWhy isnât it your business?â

âWellâ¦it just isnât. I mean, am I her business?â

âI donât know; Iâll ask her.â

âNo! I mean, I donât care. I just thought if sheâs my business, I might be her business, if you know what I mean.â

Jury was biting the inside of his cheek to keep his face straight. âNo, I donât know what you mean. Do you even know what you

mean?â

Her look was fierce. âOh, donât get *smart.*â Face flushed, she picked up the folder and sailed out of the room, dark hair flying, leaving him stranded.

When she was out of earshot, he nearly choked with laughter.

THIRTY

As Melrose came to the end of the long drive to the Maples estate, he noticed a boy standing by the riotous bed of tulips just breaking free from the hold winter had on them. A terrierlike dog stood at the boyâs feet. Melrose braked and got out of the car. The boy and dog stood and watched.

How old was he? Eleven? Nine? Three? One could no longer tell about children, childhood seeming to bypass many of them as they wore the same designer clothes as their mums and dads, went to the same chic places, smoked the same pot, leaving them, the children, by the time they were into their twenties and thirties, with nowhere new to go, nothing new to do.

These two stood still as statues, and Melrose, upon getting out of his car, called out a cheery hello. Neither replied by word or bark. Could they be mute? There had been a lot happening after the death of Billy Maples. First that detective, Chilten; then Jury; and now himself. Least of all himself. He turned away from the silent two and went up the steps to the door.

The maid let him in and asked him to wait as she went to fetch Mrs. Maples, who, she was sure, would be down in half a minute. If it was only going to take her half a minute, why wasnât she present when he arrived? For he was spot-on time.

But the time here would not be wasted as it would give him an opportunity to look closely at the painting that had caught his eye the moment heâd stepped inside. It was dazzling and it was, in all of its shower of golden glory, unmistakenly a Klimt. There was the dark-haired beauty at its center wrapped in a garment that was difficult to separate from its backgroundâall of those bright, spangly colors. The painting was big and was indeed bolted to the wall. He looked at it from a distance and up close. But who was he to judge whether or not

it was the original or a reproduction? That portrait of James in Lamb House. Were someone to tell him yes, thatâs the original John Singer Sargent, how would he know it wasnât?

Well, there was nothing to be gained by merely observing it.

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Olivia Maples was a good-looking brunette in her forties with skin that looked untouched by anything but dew. She was wearing a dark blue cashmere dress the color of her eyes. He bet she had a closet full of things the color of her eyes.

âIâm so sorry, Lord Ardry, to keep you waiting,â she said as she came into the living room to which the maid had finally led him as part of his house tour.

No, youâre not. He smiled, took the outstretched hand. âPerfectly all right.â

âMy husband will be down in a minute. Shall we have tea? Or something stronger?â

âOh, stronger, by all means.â

She smiled and moved to a table between two long windows. The table held quite an array of bottles and decanters. These people took their drinking seriously. âWhiskey? Vodka? Perhaps a martini. I make quite good ones.â

Iâll bet you do. Melrose was stumped by her manner, which revealed nothing of her feelings about the murder of her stepson. âWhiskey is fine.â

For a few moments she poured and measured and Melrose heard the gentle clink of bottles and glasses.

She brought him his drink and then took a seat at the other end of the sofa, turned so that she could see him. She sipped her drinkâvodka or gin; one of the famous martinis, perhapsâand regarded him over its bowl. Slightly flirty? He couldnât assess it. She said, âWe do appreciate your taking up Billyâs lease. It will save us so much trouble. The National Trust was very understanding, but it does need someone in the place until the new tenants are ready.â

âMy pleasure. Anyway, Iâve always meant to visit Lamb House, never got around to it; one doesnât.â Whatever that meant. âIâm very sorry about your son. You have enough to contend with without having to manage a piece of property.â

âBilly was my stepson, actually. I donât mean I didnât feelââ She let that hang. âWe both were of course shattered by it.â She sipped

her drink.

Olivia was clearly not shattered. That did not mean she felt nothing, naturally. He just wondered what constituted the something she did feel. She was hard to see into. Her flawless face, dressed down, no doubt because of what had happened, was opaque.

He said, âItâs very pleasant, Lamb House.â Now a completely natural question: âWhy did your stepson want to live there?â

She leaned back against the arm of the sofa. âBilly was never one to confide in others.â

Yet he had, to that priest Jury mentioned. And why would a simple explanation of his move be a confidence? Billy had hardly undertaken some hush-hush mission. Everyone knew where he was.

Melrose wondered about the boyâs life and wondered why he had thought of Billy just now as âthe boy.â He felt a weight of sadness in it, in Billyâs story. âPerhaps your stepson was a great admirer of Henry James.â

âI expect so. Kurt Brunner is an admirer, I know that.â

It was then the door opened to admit Roderick Maples. Melrose got up and took the manâs outstretched hand as Olivia made the unnecessary introduction.

âI was just telling Lord Ardry,â she said, âthat heâs taken a load off our shoulders.â

âIndeed.â Roderick gave him a curt nod, not at all uncivil, but as if the man could not animate his face enough for a sign of welcome. âThank you.â Roderick was not given to the hyperbole of his wife. He went to the drinks table, poured himself some whiskey, drank it down, then poured another.

Olivia watched and made no comment.

Melrose used the few moments by looking around for the Soutine painting. Ah, there it was, just to the right of the fireplace.

Roderick sank into a chair. He was tall and despite his age rather handsome in a worn-satchel way.

âLord Ardry asked me if Billy was a Henry James devoteeââ

There was no hitch in the voice at the mention of Billy.

ââand wonders why he took up the tenancy of Lamb House.â

One would think she wanted to make sure that her husband knew what had been said out of his presence, so that he wouldnât fumble and let something slip.

Roderick thought about Billyâs tenancy. âWell, I know he liked books, *loved* books. He said he found them a comfort.â Roderick

paused to reflect on that. âAre you a James scholar yourself?â Roderick seemed to have forgotten what had brought Melrose among them.

âNot at all.â Drat, wasnât he supposed to be writing a book on Henry? âA scholar, I mean. Nothing so grand. Iâm doing research with an eye to writing a book, but thatâs all.â

Olivia laughed. âI should say thatâs quite enough!â

âKurt Brunner, on the other hand, is a true aficionado of James. Youâve met him, havenât you?â

Melrose nodded as Roderick sat contemplating the ceiling, the cherubs overflowing each of its corners. âThat might be the reason Billy took on Lamb House. Heâs an interesting chap, Brunner,â said Roderick, frowning as if heâd not thought of that before. âGerman. From Munich, or is it Berlin? I think. Freshen that?â

He had risen from his chair and reached for Melroseâs glass. He took Oliviaâs and went to the drinks table.

âDo you know Rye at all?â she asked.

âOnly what Iâve picked up since being there.â He hoped the conversation wasnât going to deteriorate into talk about the surrounding country. âKurt Brunner showed me around. Heâs an interesting person, as you said. What will he be doing now?â

âI donât know,â said Olivia. âPerhaps heâll go back to Germany.â

Think him back to Berlin: a peremptory disposal of a man whoâd been their sonâs employee and friend for five years. Anyway, one might think Roderick, if not Olivia, would be having Kurt Brunner around here every day in order to find out every last bit of information about Billy.

Melrose felt stricken for Billy Maplesâs sake. He seemed not to have made a very deep inroad into the affections of these two. A story of Jamesâs heâd been reading came back to him. âThe Bench of Desolation.â

Nobody here was sitting on it. Why?

Well, for Godâs sakes, it wasnât the mystery of the week: many grown-up children were simply estranged from their parents.

He was turned in such a way on the couch that he could see through the long windows on either side of the drinks table. TheyâRoderick and Oliviaâwere more or less facing him and could not. What he saw was the face of the lad heâd seen outside. The boy was standing there.

As Olivia and Roderick kept the talk up of the countryside, the

quaintness of Rye, the history of Hastings, Melrose looked at the boy. The boyâs gaze was adamant, not unfriendly but determined. Melrose quite enjoyed a good stare now and then, but he couldnât get the boy to drop his gaze and go off.

âSomething wrong, Mr. Plant?â

âWrong? Not a bit, no.â

Olivia turned to see what was going on but before she could complete the turn, the face disappeared from the window. She looked a question at Melrose.

âThere wasâ¦someone out there, I thought.â Now, why had he not simply told her what he saw? He didnât know. Except that whenever he got around children, as hard as he tried not to get sucked into that vortex of childhood, he failed. There was something about him that brought out a childâs patronizing ways. He liked to think of himself as an adult they could spar with. Actually, he was more like a seal they tried to train. They became their most condescending little selves around him. This was more or less encapsulated in the face at the window at that moment: with Melrose they stared. With other adults, they vanished.

Roderick turned to look. âProbably only Malcolm.â

Juryâs voice: *âYou should talk to Malcolm.â*

He had neglected to tell Melrose that Malcolm was a child. From Roderickâs tone, it was fairly clear Malcolm wasnât theirs.

âWho is Malcolm?â

âOur nephew,â said Olivia. âMy sisterâs boy. Sheâs hit, you know, a bad patch. Malcolmâs been with us for two years now.â

Roderick laughed. âIâd hardly call two years a patch, Olivia. Itâs more like the entire canvas, isnât it?â

What a break! âSpeaking of canvas, I couldnât help but notice the magnificent Klimt in the foyer.â

Roderick smiled wanly. âItâs very good, isnât it? A reproduction, of course. Were it the real thing, itâd fetch millionsâmany, many millions.â He turned his gaze to the area of the fireplace. âSame goes for that Soutine. Not such a splash as the Klimt, but still good.â

Melrose said, âOh. Iâm surprised. I assumed the Klimt was the original, seeing thatâs itâs bolted to the wall.â

Roderick laughed. âThatâs not for itâs value, man; thatâs because it kept falling down. Itâs rather heavy.â

âWould you mind my having a closer look at the Soutine?â Whether theyâd mind or not, Melrose was already up and over to the

fireplace.

âNot at all, not at all,â said Roderick.

Whether the original or not, it was a landscape of tortured trees and a collapsing houseâa storm, perhaps. It made Melrose think of van Gogh; the bold brushstrokes, the intense colors, the *feeling* that nothing was going well here. âI wonder, would you mind if I took it over to the light to have a look?â

Roderickâs pause was notable. But it was a small painting and there was no reasonâwas there?âto refuse. âWhy, noâ¦I expect that wonât hurt anything.â

Melrose took it down, carefully, and walked it to the window. He studied the painting for a moment or two, then ran his finger over the frame, and then, as if accidentally, turned it over for no more than two seconds before he looked again at the picture and took it back to its resting place.

Something, some mark, had been inked over on the back. He couldnât tell what.

Roderick, lit up by liquor, was talking about Malcolm. At least, Melrose assumed they were not talking about him.

ââanothing but! Heâs surly, unresponsive, destructive, and terrible to that little dog of his,â Roderick said.

Sounds a right treat, thought Melrose.

ââties the animal up and pulls him up that garden wall.â

âHeâs only ten, Roddy.â

âWonât be eleven if your sister doesnât get back here and see to him.â

Melrose smiled. As mum hadnât been keeping up with Malcolm for two years now, the boy was probably in no danger of not celebrating his next birthday. âPerhaps he misses his parents.â That mite of sympathy from himself surprised him.

âSurprisingly,â said Roderick, âhe did appear to be talking to your detective friend.â

âThe superintendent,â added Olivia.

âAh, yes, Superintendent Jury does have a way with children.â

Roderick barely let him finish before he said, âCanât imagine what the boy could have told him thatâs in any way helpful.â The crease of Roderickâs brow grew deeper, as if this were worrying him.

âWell, Roddy, you know Malcolm did get on very well with Billy. He quite liked Billy. He might have been the only person Malcolm did like.â As if looking for the departed, her eyes searched the room.

âI expect my son had a way with children, too. I never understood it, as he hadnât much of a way with grown-ups.â Roderickâs hand slipped across his eyes, perhaps wiping at incipient tears.

Melrose set down his glass. âYou know, Iâd rather like a turn around your gardens. One of the things I most enjoy about Lamb House is its garden. Iâm quite a gardener myself. *Oh, do shut up before you stick your foot in it again!* âWould you mind?â

They both shook their heads. How could they mind? This eccentric titled gentleman comes to visit and takes the painting off the wall and then invites himself out of your company? Whatâs to mind?

âBy all means, Lord Ardry,â Olivia said. âBest be careful if Malcolm is out there.â

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âOh, all right,â said Malcolm from the top of the brick wall, as he heaved a great sigh and started lowering himself and Waldo down to the ground.

All right to what? Melrose hadnât ordered him to go into his tea. It was apparently an âall rightâ to just one more demand on him that he took like a curtain call. Melrose was fascinated in spite of himself by the descent. The terrier was tied around the waist with a red and blue bandanna over which were several windings of rope, much like the harnesses in pictures Melrose had seen somewhere of cattle being transferred from dock to ship.

The dog, unable to paw around at the wall for fingerholds, had to swing to and fro, sometimes hitting the brick, sometimes not. The boy had the rope tied about his waist and running over his shoulder in what he imagined to be mountain climber style. The other end of the rope had been slung over a sturdy branch of an oak. The dog was the first to plop to the ground and then the boy.

Under the riveting gaze of Malcolm Mott, Melrose introduced himself. âIâm Lord Ardry. How do you do?â

âAnd Iâm Gene Autry. Iâve been better.â

Melrose took a step backward. âGene Autry? Youâre not old enough to remember him. That singer cowboy? Why that was decades ago!â

âBilly has records. We listened to them.â

It was somehow poignant that Malcolm seemed to assume the whole world must know who Billy was.

âAnd do you sing?â

Malcolm scraped his poorly cut brown hair off his forehead and said nothing.

Melrose thought it might give him a leg up if he mentioned Jury. âYou met a friend of mine the other dayâa detective?â

Now Malcolm looked less hostile, but still suspicious. âYou mean the one from Scotland Yard?â

âThe very chap, yes. Iâm sorry about Billy Maples. That was terrible. Iâm living in his house in Rye at the momentââ

âYou *are*?â

âI am. Itâs just until the next tenantâs ready to take over. Have you been there to visit your cousin?â

Malcolm nodded. âA couple times, I did.â He looked off. âThere was a writer lived there once.â

For some reason this struck Melrose as inexpressibly sad. It was as if something in his experienceâand in Malcolmâsâwere summed up and sealed. But he didnât know what. âWhat did you do there?â

Malcolm shrugged.

Melrose waited but Malcolm said nothing more.

âI really like the garden. It has that high wall all around.â

Malcolm was silent.

âArenât you going to untie that dog?â

âNo. Maybe weâll have another go at it.â

âBut doesnât he mind?â Waldo didnât look as if he minded anything. Melrose had never seen such a stolid dog before.

âNah. He kind of likes it.â

âJust how do you get that idea?â

âWell, you donât hear him barking or growling or anything, do you?â

âPerhaps he doesnât think itâll do any good.â

Malcolm looked at Waldo, frowning. âWhyâd he think that?â

âBecause youâre so determined.â Melrose rather liked that morsel of analysis, but it didnât get him anywhere. âDid you climb the wall at Lamb House, you and Waldo? And perhaps your cousin liked to climb.â

Malcolm gave him a pained look. âHe did. And he used to like to walk on the nature preserve. Billy liked all the different birds and stuff. You canât see them anywhere else. Plovers and little grebes and that.â

They stood in silence for a moment, and then Malcolm asked, âWhatâs it mean if you die intesâwhatâs the word?â

âIntestate, you mean? Ordinarily, it means your estate either goes to the Crown or perhaps to your nearest relation. Or both.â

â*What?* Nah. Youâre making it up.â

âWhy on earth would I do that? Iâm not getting your cousinâs money.â

âWhat about his flat in Chelsea?â

âIâm not getting that, either.â

Malcolm was about to reply when their names were called.

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Melrose thanked the maid, who had brought his coat.

Roderick was standing with him at the door. There was no sign of Olivia.

âTalking to young Malcolm, were you?â asked Roderick. âThatâs an uphill battle. Malcolm is not very forthcoming.â

âNeither am I,â Melrose replied, holding out his hand, taking leave.

Roderick laughed and shook his hand.

THIRTY-ONE

Jury had always liked this part of Chelsea between the Fulham and Kingâs roads. Deep pink clematis spilled more profusely over gates; dogwoods were more abundant in their show of blossoms; willows lacier in their weeping branches. Perpetual spring had taken root here and flourished.

Rose Amesâs house of ruddy brick was a patch of real estate on Bury Walk worth, heâd guess, a million quid, with its front and back gardens and old stone wall offering as complete a privacy as one could hope to get in London.

The stone walk from pavement to front door already gleamed in the afternoon sun; still, a boy was sweeping it. Nearby, a gardener was hard at work on a bed of primulas. Jury wondered how large Rose Amesâs staff was.

So when she appeared at the door dressed in black, he supposed she must be an elderly servant, very neat, not a hair out of place, a housekeeper, perhaps, and he automatically asked to speak to Mrs. Rose Ames, surprised to find that he was already doing it, then later thinking it wasnât surprising, Rose Ames not being the sort to bother with middlemen or protocol or image. She was direct, conceding a point or two to polite society in offering Jury tea, which he turned down.

âThanks, but Iâm teaâd up for the day.â

A slight smile from Rose Ames. âIâve always thought there could never be enough tea, though certainly enough day.â

Oh, Wiggins, where art thou?

Jury grinned. âMy sergeant would love you, Mrs. Ames.â

She appeared to understand the allusion, but said nothing. Enough banter.

Jury had taken a seat in a crisp, glazed cotton chair in a riotous

pattern of violets, hydrangeas, roses, and bright green intertwining vines. The material was so silky he nearly slid off its edge, where he was resting his elbows on his knees, hands folded before him.

âItâs about your grandson, Billy, Mrs. Ames.â He did not know why he chose to speak of Billy Maples by his given name only, as if he knew him, as if he knew *her*. Perhaps she was one of those people who suggest to strangers someone they know or once knew, but couldnât quite put their finger on. Jury wondered who it was Rose Ames brought to mind, this person he couldnât put his finger on. There was the old woman in that awful retirement hotel inâSouth Shields, was it? Some place in Tyne and Wear; or the elderly Emily Croft, who had cautioned him that âdeath was always with us.â Yes, these women did come along in his life, not quite stamped from the same stamp, but identical enough that he noted it now. He thought of Lady Cray and smiled.

Rose Ames waited with an uncanny calmness, a measured look, a repression of feeling that perhaps broke free in the carousing slipcovers.

He smiled again, before he remembered the woman was in mourning.

âBilly,â she seemed to be reminding him. She cocked her head.

âIâm sorry.â

âYouâre from Scotland Yard.â Reminding him again of all the things he had forgotten. âAnother policemanâor detectiveâwas here.â She thought a bit. âA man named Chilten? And a female.â She pondered. âAligar?â

âAguilar.â

âThey were from the Islington station. She seemed to be in charge. Sheâs awfully, oh, intense, isnât she? Rather ferocious. Iâd hate to have her after me.â

âSo would I.â

âWhy now is Scotland Yard interested?â

âIn this case, they asked me to help. You see, I was called in first because the person who found theâwho found Billy was a friend of mine. So he called me.â

Again she cocked her head. Running it all together like a string of beads. âBut the one who found Billy was a child. A twelve-or thirteen-year-old boy, I understood.â

Jury nodded.

âA friend of yours?â

He looked around the room, wishing heâd left out that detail.

But she had sat back in the sofa among the violets and roses smiling rather cheerfully. Apparently, she liked the idea. As if any Scotland Yard detectiveâa *superintendent,* no less!âwho was that off the wall should be, if not exactly trusted, at least acceded to. She looked around the room, too, keeping him company. Even in the midst of what Jury felt must be real griefâher clothes, her strained eyes, her own lack of color spoke to thatâin the midst of all this she could connect.

âI really am sorry, Mrs. Ames, but I need to ask you a few questions.â

âAll right.â Her long narrow fingers plucked at the black sleeve at her wrist.

âYou and Billy got on well, did you?â

âYes, very well, but not always.â She considered. âHe was much too impetuous sometimes, and I took him to task for it. He thought I was too hard on him.â

âImpetuous how?â

âOne thing was that heâd give rather large sums of money away, I believe to artists, who of course could use large sums of money as they donât work.â

Jury wanted to laugh. Or perhaps she was being ironic. âProbably an artist thinks he does work.â

She puffed out a breath through pursed lips. âNot from what I could see. This particular gallery that he favored appears to go in for paintings of pleased-looking cows, and thereâs one revisionist Mark Rothko by a color-blind painter. Have you been to that gallery?â

âI have, yes. The Melville. I donât know how I missed the Rothko imitation. I saw the cows; if those were the painters Billy wanted to support, I donât blame you for thinking he threw the money away. But I donât think those painters were the ones.â

âNevertheless, I told him he was crazy to be giving money to some artistic illiterate who could best paint by numbers. His answer was that it was his money and heâd do what he liked with it.â

âThat was true, though.â

âYes, it was true. But a good deal of that money he inherited not just from his mother, but from his grandfather. My husband, James. And it just irritated me to death to see Billy throw it away.â She leaned forward, out of her glazed cotton garden. âIf this artist had been the next Manet or even David Hockney he was supporting, fine.

Indeed I would applaud that.â

âSo would anyone. Manets and Hockneys are hardly thick on the ground.â

She considered that. âYes, you do have a point. I was expecting too much.â

Jury wondered. âDo you think it was one painter in particular, then?â

âIt would make more sense, wouldnât it? I mean artistic merit aside, heâd, the painter I mean, have had some value for Billy.â

Jury looked into her gray eyes, the skin beneath them smudged from a recent bout of either allergies or tears. She looked away. âDo you think this artist was a particular friend, then?â

âOh *please,* Superintendent. You mean was he just a little Nellie? I interpreted all of this breast-beating for the sake of art to be precisely that. Perhaps Billy fancied him, I donât know.â

âYou didnât object to that?â

âWell, really, what difference would it have made if I had? Youâre wondering if I find it, generally speaking, rather louche behavior? Yes, I guess I do. But after all, oneâs sexual orientation is a given, isnât it? Being an idiot about money isnât. Itâs learned behavior, and that can change.â

âDid you meet any of Billyâs friends at all?â

âOnce, yes. He brought an extremely attractive woman here once. Her name was Anjelica, no, Angela something.â

âAnd you still think he might have been gay?â

âPerhaps she was a screen. Or she might have been some unconscious choice. Or, more simply, perhaps Billy was one of those who liked it both ways.â Daintily, she smoothed the arm of the chair.

Jury cornered a laugh and shoved it back in. âWhy do you suppose he broke it off with her?â

Roseâs eyes widened. She sat back among the flowers. âI have no idea. Iâm surprised he was taken with her, though, because she was at least ten or fifteen years older.â She pulled herself up. âMr. Jury, if I donât have a cup of tea, Iâll start baying. Would you come along to the kitchen with me? We can continue our talk whilst I put the kettle on.â

âHappy to.â Oh, how he wished Wiggins were here! For Wiggins, a trip to the kitchen was as rejuvenating as one to Lourdes. He followed Rose Ames out of the living room.

The kitchen was quite handsome. From one of those hanging

racks, copper pots and pans glinted and gleamed. She filled a copper kettle, rather old and battered, and set it on a great Viking stove.

âIâm surprised you donât have staffâor a cook, at least.â

âOh, I have them; just God knows where they are. Theyâre like mice. They skitter away at the most inconvenient times. I keep meaning to fire the lot, but Iâm lazy. It would mean getting replacements and you know how difficult *that* is. Billy was lucky to have a quite decent cook, though sheâs not as good as she thinks she is.â She whispered this last, as if in confidence.

âMrs. Jessup?â

âIs that her name? I keep wanting to call her Miss Jessel, of course. Well, one does get awfully caught up in Henry James with oneâs grandson in his old house.â

Jury leaned against the door frame as he watched her open the tea canister and spoon some out into a stoneware teapot.

âWell, the woman dislikes me with an intensity.â She shrugged as she said this. âProbably because I criticized her cooking. I went around to Lamb House for Sunday lunch a month ago. She served up a very handsome leg of lamb, rare. Now, I know rare is the going thing these days, I mean, restaurants seem to have cultivated a taste for raw everythingââshe was collecting sugar and cups and saucers on a trayââbut you shouldnât eat rare lamb. It has to be cooked through to avoid that diseaseâBSE, I thinkâno, thatâs mad cow disease, isnât it? At any rate, thereâs one that sheep carry.â

âI didnât know that.â

âWell, you do now, so take heed. Or rather, tell your cook to.â

âOh, I shall definitely do that.â

The kettle clattered over the burner and she whisked it off and filled the pot. âSo Mrs. Jessup took umbrage and told me no one had ever criticized her cooking and I told her it was no criticism of her culinary expertise, only that lamb, no matter who cooks it, must be well done. She wasnât mollified. To add to that, on another occasion, she had served rabbit, which I refused to eat because of the danger of tularaemia.â

âWhatâs that?â

âA bacteria rabbits carry and it can be fatal. Again we went the route of her cooking ability, which, I told her, was beside the point. Can you carry the tray?â

âGlad to.â Jury took it from her hands and followed her back into the living room.

Over her shoulder, Rose said, âThereâs also myxomatosis.â

âNever heard of it.â Jury set the tray on the coffee table.

âYou donât recall that awful time when the government wiped out just about the entire rabbit population because of myxomatosis? I thought that was criminal; there was no need to go to that extent.â She poured the tea. âPhilip Larkin wrote a poem about it. Do you like Philip Larkin?â

âOne of my favorites.â

She handed Jury his tea, saying, âItâs called âMyxomatosis,â but poetry never is about what it appears to be, is it? In any event, the narrator is speaking to the rabbit trapped in a field. He calls it a âsoundlessâ field. I wonder if this is because rabbits were rounded up and slaughtered and now this one is the only one left. Heâs imagining what the rabbit must have been thinking just before he killed it. He addresses the rabbit: You must have thought everything would be all right *âIf you could only keep quite still and wait.â* Itâs terribly poignant.â

ââIf you could only keep quite still and wait.â Yes. We do that ourselves, donât we? Hope if we donât make a lot of noise, the danger might pass us? Anyway, Mrs. Jessup didnât take too well to your commenting on the possible toxic effect of her cooking, or its possible fatal outcome.â Jury laughed. âCanât say I blame her. What was the name of that disease?â

âMyxomatosis.â

The small clock chimed the hour. Jury was surprised heâd been here for well over an hour. He was to be at Sir Oswaldâs by three.

But this question was important: âMrs. Ames, did you wonder what was causing Billyâs mood swings? It must have been the reason he impressed different people in different ways. Some found him easygoing, sweet, even; others found him explosive, âon a short fuseâ was how one put it.â

âNo, I didnât wonder what caused it. I *knew* what caused it. Billy was a manic-depressive.â She poured more tea.

Jury was astonished that she would assert this so baldly.

She went on. âI tried to get Roderick and Olivia to take it seriously; I know my Mary would haveââ

âYour daughter?â

She nodded. âBut Roderick is simply too proud to admit there was a mental disorder.â

âDid you say anything to Billy himself?â

âOh, yes. But itâs like talking to an alcoholic, isnât it? Heâs the last one to admit to a problem. I asked Billy to at least try and get medication. There are psychiatrists who are into pharmaceuticals who would prescribe something without demanding you see them two or three times a week. But he wouldnât do it, which was to be expected, since he wouldnât admit anything was wrong in the first place. I told him this condition runs in the family. But that had little effect.â

Jury frowned. He recalled something Roderick had said about his first wife, that she was temperamental and moody. âYou mean Mary? â

âMary? Oh, no, I mean me.â

His mouth literally fell open. â*You?*â

She laughed. It was a sweet and silvery sound. âIâm so glad youâre astonished. Yes, Iâm the villain of the piece. My own mother was in and out of institutions when they were even worse places than they are now. And I, I was luckier; my father found an excellent doctor who knew about manic-depressive behavior and its treatment long before we started calling it a bipolar disorder.â

âWhen did you get this treatment? How old were you?â

âTwenty or so. But up until that time, Iâd be ashamed to admit to some of the things I did. During the war, Iâ¦I was a hellion. I had no care nor conscience for other people. Much worse than Billy, Iâll have to say.â

He just looked at her, trying to imagine her hellion days, and couldnât. âThen could Billy have aroused somebodyâs wrath?â

âIf he was as I was in the depressive state, he certainly could. So if you asked me if he had enemies, all I can say is I wouldnât be surprised. I hate to think it, but there it is.â

Jury drank his tea and looked at her.

THIRTY-TWO

Jury sat in the mellow light of a late afternoon sun in the little mews house off Cadogan Square. Sir Oswald Maples had answered the door himself. It was, he had said, one of his better days.

Jury was talking about his visit with Rose Ames and nursing a Scotch.

Oswald laughed. âRose is quite something. Billy, gay? Thatâs what she told you?â

âI asked her.â

Oswald looked puzzled. âBut why would you think that? Iâm sure youâre wrong. Or she is.â

âShe thought it was possible, thatâs all. That Angela Riffley was a screen, or could be, possibly an unconscious choiceââ

âI never knew a person to analyze every detail the way Rose does.â

Jury smiled. âNo? What about your old workplace, GC and CS? What about you code breakers? Donât tell me that wasnât analyses right down to the ground.â

Oswald laughed a little. âYes, I get your point. I should admire the tendency. But I still think Rose is wrong.â

Jury didnât comment on that. He said, âI asked her what, if anything, she thought about Billyâs mood swings. Whether it was possible Billy had what they call bipolar disorder.â

Oswald thought about this. âHe was certainly moody, yesâ¦â

âShe hardly hesitated in telling me it was a long-standing trait in her family. She said she herself had suffered from it.â

âI had no idea. When was she diagnosed?â

âWhen she was in her twenties. Apparently she found a very good doctor. But she said up until then sheâd been a hellion.â

Oswald smiled. âI can imagine.â

âShe tried to get Billy to do something, to see a psychiatrist, somethingâbut he wouldnât.â

âNo. He found Kurt Brunner. Billy needed somebody to prop him up at times.â

âWhat were his parents doing about him?â

âRoderick didnât know what to do, and Olivia of course wasnât aware anything should be done, advocating, as always, freedom to choose.â

âAddicts arenât free to choose.â He thought about Aguilar; he wondered how free he was to choose.

âHow true.â Oswald leaned forward, plucked up his cane. âI have something here thatâs quite interesting. It might throw some light on things, certainly will upon Roderick.â Oswald managed to get to his feet with the help of the cane and move to the bookshelves along one wall. The bottom shelf of one stored papers, notebooks, and folders. From a pile of folders, he drew out one, moved to the sofa, and handed it to Jury.

âAre you familiar with the Kindertransport?â

âNo. Whatâs this?â Jury held up the folder.

âIn a moment. Let me freshen these drinks.â

As his hand went toward his glass, Jury rose and said, âAllow me.â He picked Oswaldâs glass from the coffee table. âItâs not often I get the chance to pour an eighteen-year-old Glenlivet.â

âJust be sure we each get the same measure.â

Jury did and handed Oswald his drink. Then he went back to his sofa and got comfortable. A sip of the whiskey was enough to ensure that.

âThe Kindertransport was what one might call an underground railway, organized to get children out of Germany and Poland and Czechoslovakia. These trains went by way of Holland to England. This was in thirty-nine, right after the pogroms. What was needed was a country to take the children to. The U.S.âI think to its shameârefused, as did many others. But we didnât. The trains eventually got ten thousand children out who would certainly otherwise have gone to the camps with their parents. And for the most part, these children never saw their families again. Can you imagine what that parting was like at the stations?â

âIâd rather not.â

âNo. Well, it was reported that occasionally a desperate parent would actually reach up to the window of the train and pull his child

through it.â

âHow sad. I suppose the ones who allowed their children to go, probably knowing theyâd never see them again, they were courageous.â

âYes. I try to put myself in their place. I imagine Billyâs being taken away on one of the trains.â He stopped and slowly shook his head.

But he *was* taken away. Jury could feel himself staring down miles of empty track, and he wondered what had been the use of it. The bombs, the burning buildings. He thought of his mother dying in one of them. Everything turns to rubble and dust in the end. He wondered how those parents stood it. Or how Oswald Maples stood it, his only grandson murdered.

Oswald took out a big white handkerchief, passed it over his eyes and under his nose.

Jury said, âIâm sorry.â

Maples put the handkerchief back in his pocket. âAnyway, this document,â he said, pointing to the file. âI found it in one of the huts when we were clearing out in â43. I donât know, nor did anyone, just how it got there. I donât attach any particular mystery to its having gotten there other than the mystery of carelessness in failing to log it; however, the content is quite interesting. It pertains to the Kindertransport.â

He handed the file to Jury, who opened it and looked at the several pages inside. Jury looked up. âI donât read German.â He smiled.

âOh, dear. But isnât the translation there? There *was*âI had one of the secretaries type it out in Englishâwell, sorry. I got so used to the language in the ordinary way of things. Here, let me read it to you.â

Jury passed the file across the table.

Sir Oswald adjusted his glasses, saying, âIâve read this so many times I very nearly have it memorized.â Delicately, he cleared his throat.

Jury found him to be delicate in all of his movements, a thrifty person in that respect. But then if he, Jury, were hounded by pain with every movement, heâd be economical with those movements, too.

âIt begins,â said Oswald, ârather in medias res; I have no idea what happened to the first page or pages. I supposed it could have been much longer, but who knows?â

âYouâre talking about Bletchley Park? Codes and ciphers?â
âEnigma, yes. But this wasnât coded. It begins:

â¦why being transported to freedom? Why being saved? Hans was not saved. He was not borne off to a better, brighter life. I walked that platform to the end and back again. I studied their faces, some of them no older than two or three, others fifteen or sixteen, and many Hansâs age.

And then I stood quite still and looked at the children pressed up against the open windows of one car. There were forty or fifty of them crowded there, a few weeping for their parents, but most of them with a sort of astonished interest in this event, many laughing, many pleased. It was, after all, a trip, an adventure. One of them, a boy of eight or nine, was especially excited, as if he were about to get his first taste of freedom.

Freedom: I thought this ironic. I wanted to tell him there is no freedom. We are bound, each of us, if by nothing else, by our attachments.

Of course, the Jew had not meant to kill him. (He kept claiming he had not meant to shoot the boy and perhaps not, but even there I wonder.) He was insane to fire at the group of SS where a little band of schoolchildren was so close by. In my mindâs eye I watch them, have watched them again and again.

The train rested there for some minutes while I regarded this car full of children and that particular nine-year-old boy, whose face turned pale at the trouble visited on his mother and fatherâs having to watch him go. Just as the train began to move, I reached up and from that little crowd of children pulled him down. He was startled into silence and looked around, baffled as a blind boy seeking some exit. The others called and screamed after him, and waved and hung out the window as the train left the station.

I walked the boy back to the line of parents gathered behind a barrier, all straining toward their children as the train pulled away, weeping and calling out, and this still goes on endlessly in my mind, as if all of life were this weeping and calling out.

It was not hard to find his parents. They were astounded, seeing him there and not on the train and clearly torn between

relief and anxiety. His name was Josef. That was the name they called him. I watched their faces, their pale, drawn faces and watched the light and color drain from the day. What was happening? They did not understandâhow could they?âwhen I took my Luger from its holster and shot him in the head. I watched him fall like a star and crumple at my feet.

Strange to say, but I did not hear the shot. Inside my head was nothing but a drum roll.

The guards rushed over, but stopped short when they saw me.

âThe boy did not have clearance to be on the train.â I snapped this out at them and at the parents, who were too horrified to object. Anyway, what would be the point of objecting now? He was dead, and Iâ¦

âThere it ends.â Oswald Maples shut the folder.

âMy God. Who was this person?â

âHis name was RÃ¶hm. ObergruppenfÃ¼hrer Werner RÃ¶hm, a lieutenant general in the SS.â

âA high-ranking SS officer. So the other men, the guards, the policeâno one was about to dispute what he did,â said Jury.

âExactly. The SS had carte blanche. They could do damned near whatever they chose to do.â

Jury thought for a moment. âWould that have appeared as news?â

Maples laughed. âIn the media? The shooting of a Jewish child? Probably not. It must have been happening on a daily basis. Not, of course, with that particular intent, yet many children were shot down while their parents watched. No, it wouldnât be newsworthy. We looked; we couldnât find anything.â

âBut the first incident, the boy named Hansâ?â

âThe generalâs son. One of them; he had two boys. That I did discover. Yes, that happened. A Jew named Aaron Stein leveled a shotgun at a group of German soldiers across the street from his apartment building. He killed one of the soldiers, but in doing it, shot a little boy by accident. Hans RÃ¶hm. The generalâs son.â

âAnd what happened to the shooter?â

âThat shouldnât be hard to guess: he was shot and killed. When the SS moved to round up the manâs family, they discovered they were all dead. Murdered, naturally, in the course of things. So Herr

Stein knew he wasnât putting them at risk.â

âBut the other people who lived in the building?â

âAh. Yes. Herr Stein should have thought of that. Everyone in the building was gathered up. There was a pretense of demanding a confession from whichever of them had fired the shots, but naturally, no confession was forthcoming. The man was dead. The officers knew the shooter was dead on the floor of number 21 Lindenstrasse. Since obviously no one confessed, they shot them all. Shot them where they stood. It was a mercy, I suppose, to Herr Stein that he didnât witness that. He should have thought of that, but with his entire family slaughtered, he wouldnât be thinking too clearly.â

âSuch massive retribution. People not only innocent but unconnected to this Stein.â

âThere was one connection: they were Jews.â

Jury finished off his whiskey and sat thinking. He said, âThat bit about RÃ¶hm wondering if it was an accident.â He jabbed his finger toward the file. Maples opened it again and read:

ââHe claimed that he had not meant to shoot the boyâ¦ââ

They were silent for a moment. Jury said, âBut what if he did? This Stein actually meant to shoot Hans RÃ¶hm. That would mean that General RÃ¶hm must have done something prior to this. He speaks somewhere in there of revenge. Vengeance against himself, I mean.â

Maples gave an uncertain laugh. âDear God, it goes on and on, doesnât it? RÃ¶hm commits some crime against Stein; Stein shoots RÃ¶hmâs son; RÃ¶hm shoots the child in the station.â

âYes, it goes on and on. Thereâs never an end to revenge. Itâs all connected. Who was Aaron Stein and why did he shoot the generalâs son? Assuming that was really his target.â

Maples shook his head. âWe donât know. There was no more said beyond the report that such a shooting did take place. But not with Hans RÃ¶hm as the target. Just the SS troops.â

âThat nightmare part of the army.â

âYes. The Schutzstaffel. Himmlerâs boys. Deathâs heads on their hats, runes on their collars, murder in their hearts. It was an SS officer who murdered Steinâs family. Iâd say that might be a motivator.â

âRÃ¶hm himself?â

âI shouldnât think so. He was too high ranking to perform such a routine task.â Maples picked up, set down his glass. âIâve found that people who seek revenge can wait; they can wait a long, long time.

They have no hesitancy about taking down the innocent along with the guilty. None at all.â

Jury asked, âWhy did you bring this up?â

Maples didnât answer immediately and Jury took the silence to mean he was questioning whether he should answer at all. But then he said, âKurt Brunner is, as you know, German.â

Jury waited.

âIâve been thinking about this Kindertransport and Kurt Brunner.â

Because of Sir Oswaldâs obvious discomfort, Jury tried to help the story along: âYou think Kurt Brunner has something to do with this incident involving General RÃ¶hm?â

Curtly, Maples nodded. âI do, yes.â He shifted his weight on the chair and went on. âKurt is in his midfifties, I believe. That would have made him somewhere around three or four at the time the Kindertransport started. It was 1939.â

Jury frowned. âYes. What?â

âThe little Jewish boy shot by RÃ¶hm. His name was Josef Brunner. He had a younger brother.â Maples paused, looked across at Jury.

âAre you telling me Kurt Brunner is that brother?â

Maples nodded. âItâs possible.â

âAnd you think he killed Billy?â

Sir Oswald opened his mouth, but seemed unable to form words.

âBut *why*? Billy Maples wasnât involved in these back-and-forth acts of revenge.â

âNo, but neither was his brother, Josef, involved in the shooting of the RÃ¶hmsâ son. As you said, they are back-and-forth; the innocent so often have taken the blame for the guilty, have taken, in a way, the *place* of the guilty.â Maples rubbed at his forehead with his thumb.

âThe guilty meaning who in this case?â

Maples didnât answer directly. âI find it too coincidental that Billy was murdered while Brunner was working for him.â

Jury frowned. âCoincidental? I donât see any connection, though.â

âThe connection, I fear, is Roderick.â

â*Roderick?* Whatâs his connection to Kurt Brunner?â

âYou remember I told you he was adopted. That was after the war. He was one of the children sent here for safekeeping, and my wifeâshe had a lot of sympathy for these childrenâshe wanted to take one in.â

Jury sat forward. âWhat are you saying?â

âHis father was German. I can understand, I suppose, the lure of

vengeance in this case. Itâs rather horrible.â

Jury leaned forward, elbows on knees. âOswald, youâre not telling me that Roderickâs father wasââ

As if he hadnât been dropping bombs all evening, Maples said in a perfectly calm and composed voice, rubbing his thumb across his brow, âYes, I expect I am saying thatâGeneral RÃ¶hm. Which would make RÃ¶hm Billyâs grandfather. Remember, I told you we adopted Roderick. Iâm not the grandfather by blood. If you were the brother of Josef Brunner, the child RÃ¶hm shot, wouldnât *you* want to murder RÃ¶hm? And since the general wasnât available, having died of natural causesâ¦Kurt Brunner could, of course, have murdered Roderick. But if you wanted to inflict as much pain as possible, the grandson would be your target, wouldnât he? It would cause pain to more peopleââ He shrugged. âI donât know; I just donât know.â

Neither did Jury. He could hardly take it in.

THIRTY-THREE

In Berkeley Square, the trees were just coming into leaf. It had been a cold spring.

A dwarflike maid with a face Jury did not want to compare with the objects on the wall opened Angela Riffleyâs door this time. She was a strange-looking little creature. Jury wondered if her misshapen face and small stature were a genetic thing or if Riffley had had a go at her at some point. He had the impression Riffley was not one of the chief supporters of PETA. Jury thought about Riffley while he cooled his heels in the hall and took in this time what heâd missed on his previous visit: at least a dozen niches in the plaster, no bigger than eight or nine inches high and each less than a foot wide, in which were housed various gargoylelike carvings that he had no desire to inspect.

Those were the Riffleys: he with his sadistic trophy-hunting streak, she with her only hinted-at illustrious career and genuine talent for mystification. Had Jury been a police profiler he would have come up blank as far as Angela was concerned.

âMr. Jury!â

He smiled. Was this an attempt to demote him or merely a sardonic comment on Londonâs finest? He bet she would be happy to use the same lingo the denizens under Waterloo Bridge used to refer to the police, if she knew it.

âMrs. Riffley.â He allowed himself a sardonic little bow.

Today she was dressed in a tight white skirt with a graceful sort of ruffle at the hem, a white silk shirt, and a lemony cashmere cardigan tied jauntily around her shoulders. She looked ambrosial. âCome on into the library.â

âHow about some tea?â she asked.

He wanted to say, *No, and donât leave me alone in here,* but he put

on a brave face. Malcolm Mott would have done this better. âI think Iâd like a whiskey.â

That seemed to please her to death. âAbsolutely!â She threw up her hands as if sheâd been waiting all day for someone to ask for it. She went to the drinks table.

It was, he supposed, a compliment that she valued him more than his purpose in coming. âSoda? I know you donât want ice, you purist.â

âSoda, yes. A lot.â

She splashed around at the table with such abandon, she might have been swimming through it. She brought him his drink. âI donât see why diluting a drink one way is any better than diluting it in another.â She returned to the table and made her own drink: whiskey and ice.

âItâs the tradition youâre toying with, thatâs all.â

âSorry.â She eased herself down on the zebra love seat, a mate to the one on which he sat, and raised her glass to him.

He raised his glass and avoided looking at the wall.

He heard a slight rasp as she crossed her stockinged legs. The sound was not unpleasant. Nor were the legs. âMrs. Riffleyââ

âCanât you call me Angela? Or is that against code?â

He leaned forward, put his drink on the table beside the strange cigarette lighter. âItâs about the time Billy took you to his parentsâ estate.â

âOh, that.â She put her head back and gave a short laugh. âIsnât the father just too provincial? But the stepmotherâs worse.â

âBilly wanted you to look at a couple of paintingsââ

She nodded, sipped her drink. âHe did, yes. A Klimt and a Soutine. That was a few months ago. That Klimt was a marvel. Just wonderful. It couldnât have been one of the two well-known portraits of Adele Bloch-Bauerâs since we know where those are. What I think is that itâs a preliminary sort of study. Billy wanted to know if they were reproductions. That heâd think so rather surprised me. And I wondered why he didnât ask his father; after all, they were his paintings. But Billy just said no and that he wanted my opinion. Theyâre authentic, of course they are. Definitely originals. So what you want to know is why the father was fobbing them off as reproductions?â

âThatâs one thing. Another is how you can be so sure.â

She took a cigarette from the inlaid box. Jury refused to pick up

the lighter, so she lit her own cigarette and sat back. *Was she buying time,* he wondered? *In order to organize her past careers?*

âI know because Iâve a good deal of experience along that line. I was curator for a small gallery in Luxembourg.â

Now there was a place the imagination probably didnât hover for long. Not that there was anything wrong with Luxembourg, itâs just one didnât often think about it. Excellent choice! âLuxembourg? What gallery was that?â

âThe Kersten. Itâs not there anymore. I have no idea what happened to it.â

Jury sat back, wondering where it had gone and where it had been. âBut in order really to know, wouldnât the canvas have to be subjected to tests?â

âOh, my, yes, without question. One wouldnât want to depend on somebodyâs eye, no matter how well trained. But of course one couldnât tear the Klimt off the wall, could one? And the smaller work, the Soutine, not quite so valuable but it would still cost someone dear to own itâRoderick wouldnât see any reason to test it. He insisted it was a reproduction. Why are you interested in this?â

âBecause I think itâs important. Billy apparently did. Did he give you some idea as to what he was looking for?â

She shook her head. âNot a clue, no.â

âHave you done that kind of workâI mean, as a curatorâanywhere else?â

âNot as curator. However, Iâve served as consultant for a few collectors. Lucky for one I did, as he would have been stuck with a not very distinguished Raphael. He was laboring under the impression it was the Raphael thatâs still missing after it was taken to Germany.â

âWho was this collector?â

Angela just looked at Jury and stubbed out her cigarette. With a smile she asked, âWhy do you want to know, for heavenâs sakes? One would think you were a detective.â

âI do give that impression, unfortunately.â He smiled. âIâm just curious.â

âNo, youâre not. Youâre vetting me.â

Jury ignored that. âThere must be databasesââ

âOf course. Thereâs a central registry in just about any country involved in World War Two. And museums and auction housesâChristieâs for instanceâdo provenance investigations. Museums have provenance lists. Thereâs a great deal of information

floating about. In the case of the Klimt and the Soutine, as I knew where the paintings are now, and to whom they belong, it wasnât hard.â She drank off her whiskey.

âWait a moment.â Jury sat forward suddenly. âYou mean you did investigate?â

âWell, of course I did. I assumed you knew that.â

âNo, I didnât. Why didnât you mention it before?â

Angela Riffley looked over at the half-alive wall of mounted heads and other things, and said, âIt could be because Iâm not a mind reader, Superintendent. What do you think?â

Jury gave a brief laugh. âOkay, sorry. What did you come up with?â

She set her drink down. âIâll just fetch the paper. Wait here.â

Jury spent the five minutes it took her to go and come back in practicing lighting the cigarette lighter buried in the awkward piece of wood.

âHere we are.â She was back and reseating herself and holding a sheet of paper. âBoth paintings were acquisitions of a Dresden museum pretty much demolished during the war; if I remember correctly, it was Dresden that was flattened, wasnât it? But some of the paintings were removed before this. Both the Klimt, unnamed, or, rather, name unknown. I like to call her The Golden Girl. And the Soutine, called *Schloss Moser,* turned up on a Nazi confiscation list. A number of the paintings were taken over by GÃ¶ring, who considered himself an art critic when he was actually an idiot. The two weâre interested in went to an SS officer named Werner RÃ¶hm. From there, thereâs no record of a sale. The two paintings fall off the radar until two years later when they turn up in the home of a couple named Burkhoff in Munich. My guess is that they were family or friends or colleagues of this General RÃ¶hm, and that he gave them to the Burkhoffs for safekeeping.

âSomehow or other, Billyâs father, Roderick, was in touch with them and they packed the two paintings and sent them to him.â She gave Jury a long look. âRoderick Maples was apparently the generalâs son.â

âHow did Billy react to this?â

Angela set down her drink and looked at the fireplace and seemed to study the cold grate. Then she sat back and said, âI couldnât tell. Youâd have to have known Billy. He was the most unreadable person Iâve ever seen. If he wanted to be, that is. Other times, he was quite

transparent.â

âHe didnât try to take it any further?â

âOh, Iâm quite sure he did.â

âYou mean, as far as this General RÃ¶hm is concerned.â

âYes. But he didnât tell me if heâd discovered anything.â Her shrug was a little sad, a little helpless.

Jury got up. âI really appreciate this, Angela. Youâve been a lot of help; I understand more than I did about Billy.â He handed her a card jotting down his home phone number in addition to Aguilarâs. Heâd like to hear a conversation between the two of them. âIf you recall something later, just call one of us.â

She took the card and sat looking at it. Then she recovered some of her old insouciance. He wondered how much it cost her to keep it going.

She picked up her glass. âWould you like another drink before you go?â

âNo, thanks.â

âWould you like to take me to dinner tonight?â

He laughed. âIâd like it, yes, very much. But could I have a rain check?â

Angela Riffley was looking at one of the long windows where sun, the color of apricots, cast rhomboids of light on the floor. âWhy? It isnât raining.â

THIRTY-FOUR

âItâs a bit like that ship, isnât it?â said Wiggins, stirring his tea. He was thoughtful.

Jury looked across his deskâsquinted, actuallyâthinking that might bring the question into focus as he had no idea what Wiggins meant. âWhat ship? What are you talking about?â

That morning he had been relating to his sergeant the story he had heard yesterday afternoon from Sir Oswald Maples about the Kindertransport and the shooting. Wiggins had been transfixed, stirring and stirring his tea. Why, then, was he dragging in irrelevancies?

âThe seavacs.â

âThe *what*? Whatâs a seavac?â

âItâs a term they came up with during the war to mean evacuation by sea. Mrs. Jessup was telling me about it, you know, when you and Mr. Plant were lazying out in the garden. You donât recall that ship *Benares*? Its actual name was *City of Benares.â*

Jury felt at this point so far from the shore of his Kindertransport, he would have to swim to it. He knew heâd never make it. âNo, I donât, and we werenât âlazying,â if thatâs a word, and I doubt it. Whatâs this ship got to do with anything?â

âIt was an ocean liner, usually plied the India route, you know the Indian Ocean. When the Blitz happened, it was billeted to transport children to Canada.â

In spite of the conversation with Maples, Jury stayed as far away from the events of World War Two as possible. Maplesâs Berlin story, happening as it did in Germany, had not been mined with memories. Juryâs father also had died in the war, his plane shot down.

Wiggins went on. âThere was this evacuation of children to Canada. The *City of Benares* carried some six hundred kiddies across

the Atlantic. This wasnât the safest route by sea, certainly, considering the German U-boats. The children were having a marvelous timeâat least this is what I readâwith all of that luxury, all of that *food,* sixty flavors of ice cream, the waiters in Indian dress apparently treating them like princes. Well, a German U-boat fired at the ship and it sank. All of these poor children tossed into the sea, including Mrs. Jessupâs sisters. Awful, isnât it? Only a handful survived.

âThatâs very sad, but whatâs this got to do withââ

Wiggins wasnât listening to his superior, he was carrying on with his own story. âAnd there were quite awful stories, too, about kidsâ being pushed from lifeboats by othersâthere were adults, too, with their children, whoâd paid for the passage. But the bodies of these children floating in the ocean. God, itâs a terrible story.â

âYes it is, Wiggins; itâs terrible. And I donât mean to sound hard-hearted about it, but arenât you missing the point?â

Wiggins looked surprised. âAm I?â

âYes. The point being not the evacuation of children itself, but that the brother of this boy who was shot in cold blood in front of him and his parents could be Kurt Brunner? And that Kurt Brunner could in turn have murdered Billy Maples in revenge? Itâs like a bloody Greek tragedy.â

Wiggins sat back. âIt doesnât seem likely, though. I mean, whatâs the connection? Weâve gotââWiggins began ticking points off on his fingersâât hat confession, or report, or whatever it was from this German officerââ

âGeneral RÃ¶hm.â

ââand you donât know really what that is. Its source is questionable.â

Jury leaned forward. âYouâre suggesting RÃ¶hm didnât write it?â

âMostly whether it was what it appeared to be. He could have been writing a book, for all you know.â Wiggins gave a snuffling little laugh and drank his tea.

Jury ignored the laugh. âLetâs assume for the moment it was what Oswald Maples took it to be.â

But Wiggins, caught up in his own little schema, folded down another finger. âAh, but it could even not have said what Sir Oswald Maples said it said. You donât know German.â

âOh, please. Maples is trying to trap me or lure me into doing something?â

Wigginsâs smile was razor thin. âLetâs not forget Harry Johnson,

sir.â

Harry Johnson. Jury wondered if Harry Johnson had channeled his cleverness to Wiggins by way of Jury, the empty vessel. âI havenât forgotten Harry Johnson. Iâm still on his case. But youâre not really suggesting Oswald Maples is concocting this story?â

Wiggins, quite full of his own interpretation of these events, events he had not witnessed, leaned back and studied the ceiling, although there was nothing up there to look at. Up came his hand again, third finger folded down. âWhat if it was Sir Oswald himself?â

âWhat?â

âWhoâs to say he didnât shoot Billy Maples himself?â Wiggins held both hands palms out to stave off Juryâs objections. âJust another point to consider. We should explore all avenues.â

âDonât be a horseâs arse. Your avenue is about as likely as a moon-beam to Mars. Come down to Earth.â

Wiggins sighed. âIf I may say so, sir, youâve only one fault in this job: you empathize too much with witnessesââ

âI do? *I* do? And I hear this coming from *you*? Anytime a suspect so much as sneezes, you bring out your roots and herbs and black biscuits. You practically go to *bed* for them.â

Unoffended, seeing he was sitting in the catbird seat above Jury, the emotional moron, Wiggins continued: âThe thing is, why would Brunner go to such elaborate lengths to murder the Maples lad?â

Billy wasnât a lad, though; he was thirty-two. And it occurred to Jury that he struck everybody as being a youngster. âI donât know.â

Sucking thoughtfully on his teeth, Wiggins said, âStill, the connection seems awfully weak. The SS officer shoots a boy right in front of his family.â Wiggins came down from the ceiling and looked at Jury. âYou said Brunner said he and Billy went to that church near Lamb House.â

âThey did a couple of times.â

âBut heâs a Jew, isnât he?â

âThere are any number of reasons one might jettison the faith of oneâs family or simply go with a friend to a different church. Stillâ¦itâs a point, Wiggins.â He thought for a moment, then rose, unhooked his coat from the ancient rack, and said, âLetâs ask him.â

Wigginsâs eyebrows raised in question.

âBrunner. I want to talk to him again. And perhaps you could have another heart-to-heart with the cook. She might have some insight into Brunner and Billyâs relationship. Donât spell it out for her,

though.â

On the way out of the building, down the hall, in the elevator, and through the front doors of New Scotland Yard, Wiggins kept on about the desperate accounts of the *City of Benares,* of incidents of adults and children pushing children out of a lifeboat back into the water.

âYouâd think, wouldnât you, sir, it would always be women and children first? And the good old British sense of fair play?â

âNo, Wiggins, Iâd think it would be every man for himself and the hell with fair play.â

THIRTY-FIVE

They found an illegal parking spot just below Market Road and Jury told Wiggins to take it. He didnât feel like searching for a place where parking was at a premium, or negotiating the narrow and hilly streets of Rye with Wiggins at the wheel. They left the car and hiked up the hill of Market Road.

âVery nice. Very quaint,â said Wiggins, swiveling his head back and forth until Jury expected it to go all the way round.

âYouâve got an amazing range of motion. Maybe I should call an exorcist.â

âFunny. But it might be you who needs one, sir. Spooked, you are.â

Jury stopped. âWhat in hell are you talking about?â

Wiggins looked enigmatic and walked on.

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âHeâs not here at the moment, Superintendent; heâs gone for a walk with Mr. Brunner. But please, do come in.â Mrs. Jessup stepped back from the door.

He thanked her as she took their coats and then ushered them into the little room on the right, a modest repository of Jamesian memorabilia. It was scarcely large enough to serve as a waiting room. There were but two chairs.

âLord Ardryâs keeping you on then, Mrs. Jessup?â said Jury, rather stating the obvious.

âHe is, which is very kind of him, indeed.â

âOh, I doubt kindness has much to do with it. He wants a good cook is my guess.â

âWell, I hope heâs satisfied.â

Wiggins was checking out the framed pictures, one of which was a

caricature of the great man himself.

âLord Ardry likes to have his guests shown in here; it gives them something to look at.â

They were interrupted by the opening of the front door.

âThatâll be him now.â She went into the hall, spoke a few words, and then took herself off to her kitchen.

He heard Plantâs voice and then he himself stood in the doorway. âWell! This is a pleasant surprise!â

Although spoken for the benefit of Mrs. Jessup, who retreated to the back of the house, it still sounded too banal a comment to be coming from Melrose Plant.

âKurt Brunner isnât with you?â

âNo. Heâs gone back to the lodgeâthatâs over on the cliff roadâwhere heâs staying at the moment. I expect heâll be back in London in a day or two.â Melrose still stood, clasping the book heâd been carrying to his chest. His other hand grasped his tweed jacket at a point between buttons one and two. What did this pose remind Jury of? Oh, yes: the portrait of Henry James, the famous one done by John Singer Sargent where James seemed to have a thumb hooked into his waistcoat pocket. A reproduction of the painting hung out there in the entryway.

âWhat are you reading?â

âJames. A volume of his short stories.â

âWhy donât you sit down?â

âRight-o.â

âRight-o?â Jury cocked his head and looked at his friend, about to become his former friend if he didnât cut it out. He was still holding on to his jacket. Jury was positive Plant wouldâve been wearing a striped waistcoat if heâd had one.

Wiggins was still floating about the room, looking at the stuff on the walls.

âA wonderful room, eh, Sergeant Wiggins? I come in here often just to sit.â

âOh?â said Jury. âI thought perhaps youâd given up sitting, seeing as how youâre still standing there.â

âDroll, very droll.â Melrose lowered himself onto a stool. âDo you know what Iâm wondering?â

âIâve no idea. Whether to invite your publisher down for the day? â

âWhat Iâm wondering is whether the National Trust would be

willing to sell this place. Iâve really become quite attached to it.â

âYouâve been here how long now?â

âFour days.â

âFour days, and you think youâre him, donât you?â

Wiggins gave one of his snuffle laughs and said, or read from the notebook on a small desk, ââWhy use one word when five will do?ââ

Melrose laughed and then returned to his topic. âIâd think the Trust would be happy to get the property off its hands.â

âThat rather subverts the whole idea of the National Trust, doesnât it?â

Melroseâs brow clouded over again. âWhat do you mean?â

âWell, in your former life as a fairly intelligent grown man, I think you would have known what I meant. Think about it: âtrustâ is the key word here.â

âAnyway, James paid two thousand pounds for the house. Can you believe it?â

âThatâs probably what you spend for a stay at Boringâs.â

Melrose had taken the other chair by now, and sat forward and tapped the book heâd been holding. âHave you read âThe Real Thingâ?â

âNo, I donât have much time for reading what with the mystery of who shot Billy Maples on my hands. Supposed to be on your hands, too, but I expect I can kiss that idea good-bye.â

Melrose went on, inching forward in his seat. âIn this story, a smart, prosperous-looking coupleâwho are actually destituteâprevail upon the artist to have them sit for him. For pay, of course. Theyâre impoverished gentility. Quite smart, or did I say that? He draws them again and again, the woman and then her husband. And he finds theyâre impossible as sitters because they are what they are. The artist says of the woman, âShe was the real thing, but she was always the same thing.â I think thatâs a corker!â

âI donât get it,â said Wiggins, turning from one of the pictures on the wall.

âThereâs nothing really to get.â

âWell, not for you and Henry James, maybe, but Wiggins here and I are just a couple of mugs.â

âAn artist has no scope if what heâs looking at is exactly what heâs attempting to paint. For instance, if I were to paint a cook, I wouldnât have Mrs. Jessup sit for me because sheâs too much of a cook. My mind would have no place to go beyond âcook.ââ

âBut thatâs what youâd be painting,â said Wiggins. âA cook.â He went back to the pictures.

âWhen you come back from Henry James land,â said Jury to Melrose, who had crossed his legs and returned his hand to dragging down his lapel, âperhaps you could help me with this investigation.â

âWatch for signs.â

âI beg your pardon?â

âJames said, âTry to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost! ââ

âIâve been trying to be one of them most of my working life.â

As if Jury hadnât spoken, Melrose went on: âSmall things, what a gambler would call âtells.â You see, people can give themselves away in the tiniest gesture.â

âLike youâre giving away youâre the poor manâs Henry James? Wait a tick; Iâve got it! If I were an artist and I wanted to do a book illustration of Henry, I would not want him, Iâd want you! Henry is too much the real bloody thing!â

Melrose sighed hugely, as if every separate sigh in the town of Rye had collected here and Melrose were heaving it. âDonât be ridiculous. You know, for a detective, you can be pretty silly.â

Wiggins snickered.

Jury smiled and crossed his arms across his chest. âAt least Iâm not morphing into Sherlock Holmes.â

âWhat I mean by small signs is this: remember in *Portrait of a Lady,* Osmond and Madame Merle are in the living room of Osmondâs house? When Isabel walks into the room where Osmond is seated and Madame Merle is standing, she knows immediately that something is going on between them. She knows theyâve been intimate.â

âYou mean Osmondâs been fucking the lady in question.â

âVery funny. Do you know why James didnât use language like that? Do you? Not because itâs vulgar, not because he was prissy, but because it doesnât mean anything.â

âYou could have fooled me.â

âHow dense can you be?â

âTry me.â

âIâm just making a point: that the whole show is given away in nothing more than Osmondâs remaining seated. Thatâs what I mean by watching for signs.â

âYou seem to forget, my friend, I get paid to watch for signs. What Iâd like to know is if you, who are not being paid, and no wonder, if

youâve discovered anything related to this case.â

âIâve only been here four days.â

âOh, now your brief tenure is being used to excuse you. Itâs been time enough to turn into Henry James.â

âDonât be ridiculous. Iâve done no such thing. Although I will admit this house is somewhat overwhelming. Thereâs a pronounced aura of habitation.â

Jury made a sound through his nose.

âSo it wouldnât surprise you,â said Wiggins, come around again from his tour of the pictures, âif you stumbled on his ghost whilst you were going upstairs?â

âYou know, thereâs another story where the narratorâin this one itâs probably James himselfâdoes exactly that: he meets his own ghost on the stair. Or the ghost of what he might have been had he chosen a direction other than the one he didââ

ââThe Jolly Corner,ââ said Jury.

âYouâve a good memory!â

âThatâs another thing I get paid to do: remember things. Could we set aside the haunting of Lamb House and talk about Brunner? The one I really came to see.â

âI thought I told youââ

âYouâve told me sod-all. Youâve been too busy reimagining yourself.â

Melrose gave him a dismissive wave. âAll right, but letâs get out of here; Iâm feeling claustrophobic.â

âYes, with all four of us in this small room, I can see why.â

Wiggins was quick to remind everyone that he suffered from claustrophobia occasionally, but heâd found a good remedy for it, which heâd share with Mr. Plant if he desired.

Melrose thanked him and suggested they go into the garden, at which point Mrs. Jessup appeared and asked them if they would like coffee or tea.

Wiggins stayed in the kitchen with Mrs. Jessup and some fresh scones.

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They sat themselves on a Victorian iron bench in the garden. It was a large and well-kept area surrounded by a high stone wall. It put Jury in mind of the wall heâd climbed with Malcolm. âHow did you get on with Malcolm?â he asked.

âYou could have told me he was ten.â

âOh, didnât I?â

ââOh, didnât I?ââ Melrose fluted. âYou know how anyone under twenty usually relates to me. They always take that lofty tone, as if theyâd got so much better sense than I.â He kicked a pebble onto the lawn.

Jury tried to hold back a smile. Then he asked, âWhat about Billyâs parents?â

âRoderick is certainly taking it harder than Olivia. But Billy wasnât her son, so thatâs to be expected. Except, no, wait a momentâit really isnât to be expected. Billy was murdered, for heavenâs sakes, and murdered in very mysterious circumstances. That should give anyone who knew him, and certainly family, a terrible jolt. She strikes me as being awfully casual. She isnât thereâI mean, with the event.â

Jury said, âSheâs easily distracted by any new man is what Iâd say. Sheâs a strange woman, hot for sex but cold at heart. Iâve wondered about her and Billy. More than the Maples family, though, what about Kurt Brunner? Give me your impression and Iâll tell you a story. He is, indeed, the reason we came.â

âHeâs an extremely accommodating chap. Knows a lot about Rye. Heâs my historian. And heâs a huge Henry James fan. I think heâs read everything, including *The Sacred Fount,* which, as a matter of fact he finds overwrought. I argued that James might be a lot of things, but overwrought isnât one of them.â Melrose slid down a little on the bench, hands now clasped behind his head. It was a cool, bright day. âYes, weâve had some jolly arguments about James.â

âIâm glad theyâve been jolly. But leaving aside the jolliness of the talk, Iâm especially interested in himâBrunnerâbecause I think thereâs a good chance heâs the shooter.â

Melrose sat up with a jerk. âYou canât be serious!â

âI am.â

âOh, Richard, come on! No, youâre wrong, thatâs all. Brunner couldnât have done it. Wasnât he in Berlin?â

âNot on the day, or rather the night, of Billyâs shooting. He was back that evening.â Jury looked at Melrose and shook his head. âYouâre not even asking me how I came to this conclusion.â

âAll right. How did you?â

Jury told him the story of the Kindertransport and of the little boy shot dead at the station in front of his parents. âLieutenant-General

Werner RÃ¶hm.â

âMy God! But the parentsâand clearly the boyâhad done nothing at all. They were innocent.â

Jury looked at the high wall of the garden and thought of the Polish ghetto. He said, âMultiply that childâs shooting by around six million of those others who had done nothing wrong. Youâre right. Now, mum and dad and little brother. They could only get space on the train for one of the children and thought the three-year-old was just too young to be sent away all alone.â

âWhen was this?â

â1939, I believe.â

âSo they suspected what was in store for them, this family?â

âYes, but I imagine denial was pretty strong then.â Into a thoughtful silence, Jury dropped the unwelcome news: âTheir name was Brunner.â

âBrunner?â

âThe point is that there is a reason to suspect this little brother, the other child who had to witness the shooting.â

âWait a minuteâ¦â The obvious objection to Juryâs ending came to him: âWhat has it to do with Billy Maples?â

âRoderick. Billyâs father is the connection. Roderick is not by blood Oswald Maplesâs son. Roderick was one of those evacuated children on the Kindertransport. Heâs German.â

Melrose looked as if Jury had thrown a basin of ice water in his face. He could say nothing.

âOswald Maples adopted him when he was eight or nine. The exact age wasnât certain. Roderickâs father had plenty of influence, enough to get the child out of the country. This was in â42 and they saw what was coming.â

âThen, well, what were they worried about? The war in general? Afraid theyâd be bombed?â

âRoderickâs father was a war criminal.â

âWhat? You mean he was in with Himmler and Goebbels and the rest of them?â

âThatâs right.â

Melrose was silent for a moment. âSurely youâre not saying the father was this General RÃ¶hm?â Melrose waved the rest away.

âRoderick is RÃ¶hmâs son, thatâs right. This is what Oswald Maples is quite sure of. Given what Maples himself was involved with.â

âWhat?â

âDonât you remember Colonel Neameâs recommending Sir Oswald in the Croft case last year? Maples was at Bletchley Park, working in codes and ciphers. The Enigma code business. So he was accustomed to working with intense detail, to ferreting things out, to teasing out answers. The real identity of the boy was suspect, and following the adoption, Maples naturally wanted to know who the child really was. It was difficult because so much had been lost; many of the kids had no documents at all. But Maples kept up the hunt. This was probably why he was so good with code. He was relentless. Finally when Roderick was around fifteen, Maples comes to the end of the dreadful journey and discovers SS General RÃ¶hmâ¦a mob man if there ever was one. The story of the little Brunner boyâs murder was an item in a long list of crimes against humanity.â

âWhy wouldnât his trial then have satisfied Brunnerâs need for revenge?â

âThere was no record of his having been tried. Maybe he got awayâBrazil, Argentinaâwho knows?â

âDoes Roderick know about his past, then?â

âSir Oswald canât be sure; he doesnât know how much Roderick remembers. He might recall his father as a virtuous man who took him to the beach and told him stories and played the zither. Does he know his father wore the deathâs head uniform? None of us can say. He didnât speak about the family heâd left in Germany. I, on the other hand, am pretty sure Roderick knows about his past. The two paintingsââ

Melrose interrupted. âYes, you were right. I managed to get a look at the back of the Soutine. There was something inked over.â

âI wouldnât be surprised to find itâs a swastika. They put that on their confiscated art. Iâm not sure why Roderick wouldnât simply have replaced the backingââ

âBut why would he? Thereâd be no reason for anyone to suspect the painting was original, and even if someone did, that it was part of the Nazi loot. But I see what you mean. If Roderick knew about the paintings, then he probably knew about RÃ¶hm.â

There was a brief silence, which Jury broke by saying, âYouâre not convinced, are you, about Brunner?â

âThat he murdered Billy Maples? No. He didnât do it.â

âDo you believe Brunner is the brother of the little boy RÃ¶hm shot?â

âThat, of course, is quite possible, given that Oswald Maples traced this boyâs history. Only thereâs plenty of room for doubt. I would imagine there must be at least one point in the chain of events thatâs weak. What about that boy, Hans? The one who might have been shot intentionally.â

âPossiblyââ

âOr by accident. What about that?â

âI donât know. He doesnât know.â

âBut that sounds like retribution. For what?â

âIt was assumed the shots were aimed at the SS-Waffen across the street. Later, after the boy in the group of boys was killed, it was thought that perhaps that was meant to happen. The shot wasnât necessarily aimed at RÃ¶hmâs boy. The shooter would have known the little band of boys there werenât Jews, but children of the Reich. Their school uniforms would have told him that.â

âHow do you know Sir Oswald Maples isnât simply wrong?â

âI donât. But I see no reason to doubt him.â

âThereâs every reason. The story is tooâitâs too fevered. The work of a fevered brain.â Melrose frowned deeply.

Jury burst out laughing. âIâll be sure to tell him that. Look: would you say the tales about all of the German officers that Elie Wiesel ran to ground were the work of a fevered brain?â

âNo. Of course not.â

âDo you think perhaps working out code is a fevered occupationâthat sort of training is posited on oneâs ability to see whatâs there and not whatâs not there.â

âNeverthelessââ

âYouâre not operating on the basis of any evidence at all except for your feelings about the man himselfâKurt Brunner.â

âThat doesnât strike you as evidence? The man himself?â said Melrose.

âNo. It hasnât ever since I read *Hamlet* and joined the police force.â

âYou never feel you know whether a witness is guilty or not?â

âOf course I do. But thatâs only the beginning. Thatâs not what lands them in the nick.â

Melrose got up and thrust his hands into his pockets. âThe thing is this: weâre not talking about Brunnerâs shooting Billy Maples for, say, personal gain, or because Billyâs got his sister preggers, or in a sudden fit of temper. Weâre talking about revenge on an innocent person for

a crime that happened half a century ago.â

âRight. Yet you seem to have no trouble believing General RÃ¶hm was the author of that crime: he shot a perfectly innocent boy, a member of a perfectly innocent family.â

âYes. Yes. But itâs not just that. Billy Maples was the innocent person for whom Kurt Brunner had worked for five years. Who had treated him well. Hell, they never even quarreled.â

âIâm not sure I see what this is in aid of.â

âSimply that Kurt Brunner surely wouldnât have murdered Billy Maples if the original crime had nothing to do with Billy. Why didnât he murder Roderick? Why not Billyâs father, since he was closer to the incident than Billy himself.â

âBut that, I believe, is the psychology of the whole thing. Where heâd do the most damage or cause the most suffering would be to kill Billy.â

âAnd it was Kurt Brunnerâs brother whoâd been randomly murdered by RÃ¶hm. That boy had absolutely nothing to do with any crime against RÃ¶hm. As far as Iâm concerned, that was almost total madness.â

They turned at a call. Wiggins was standing in the doorway. âMrs. Jessup would like to know if youâd care for tea.â

Jury feigned surprise. âYou mean thereâs some left? Youâve been in the kitchen for a goodish hour.â

âIt was you who wanted me to talk to her.â

âRight. I feel the reproof.â

Wiggins sighed. âNo, you donât.â

Jury smiled. âIâm going to have a talk with Kurt Brunner. You say heâs staying at the lodge? Whereâs that?â

âOn the East Cliff. Hilderâs Cliff Road. Ten-minute walk. But you look pretty hardy for your age.â Melrose got up from the bench and stretched. âI wouldnât mind a cup of tea myself. Are there any more of those homemade biscuits?â

âNo,â said Wiggins, with a purposeful look at Jury. âI ate them all.â

THIRTY-SIX

The lodge was a well-positioned white stone building across from the wall and the lookout place over the town salts. Jury stopped for a few moments on the opposite side of the road where he could peer over the salts and river and the marsh beyond. When Rye had been one of the working ports along this southeast coastline, the waves had curled in almost to the point where he now stood.

He met Kurt Brunner in the lobby and they were sitting now in the shadow of the fire and under a painting of flying black-headed gulls, another of a bittern almost lost in reeds and sea aster, and a muted painting of a mallard drifting in a pond. The camouflages of nature never ceased to amaze him.

Kurt Brunner sat in a wing chair, his face in part shadow. âIâd be glad to tell you more about Billy, but thatâs all I know. As I said before, he was a very private person.â

Jury had to credit Brunner with a good deal of patience; he had been asked the same question a half dozen times among Aguilar, Chilten, and Jury. He did not mind repeating an answer to a question he thought Jury had asked before.

âNo, I donât mean Billy. Iâm interested in your own life in Germany. Munich, wasnât it? Where you were over a week ago when Billy was murdered.â

âYes, I believe I told you that. And it was Berlin, not Munich.â

âCould you expand upon it, though? Your parents died during the war, I know that. What about siblings?â

âOne brother, older than I. He was shot when he was nine years old.â

âThatâs terrible. Do you recall the circumstances?â

Brunner shook his head. âNo, I donât. My parents wouldnât talk about it. They were devastated by his death. And I was so

youngâthree or four, maybeâI canât really remember him.â

âThis shooting, then, you donât know where it happened?â

âNo. I mean, except it was in Berlin. At first, I asked a lot of questions about Josefâthat was his name, Josefâbut I soon gave up.â

âIt didnât occur to you, later, I mean, to trace him? To find out about the whole thing?â

âOf course it occurred to me. But I got nowhere. The trouble was, as you might guess, so much paper was lost, so many documents. I tried his school. He was six years older than I. The school had been bombed, demolished during the war. The same for official documents, birth and death certificatesâall that.â

This lack of records was always such a neat way of disowning the past or knowledge of anything inconvenient or incriminating. You could plead ignorance, and no one would call you a liar.

Except for someone like Sir Oswald Maples.

âWhy all this interest in my brother, Superintendent? Have you found out something I donât know about?â

Jury smiled slightly. âIâd say so, especially since you donât appear to know anything at all.â

Brunnerâs expression changed. Two couples walked by, heading for the dining room and an early dinner. He leaned forward. âWhy the sarcasm, Superintendent? Iâve answered the same questions several times over. Iâve tried to cooperate.â

Jury chewed the inside of his lip, watching Brunner. âI donât believe so.â

âI beg your pardon?â

âI think thereâs a lot youâre not telling us. For example, the school might have been nothing but rubble, but there were records that were saved.â

âHow did you come by this knowledge?â

âA rather thorough search by parties with a lot of experience doing it.â

Brunner frowned. âAnd what did this reveal about Josef?â

Jury didnât answer. Instead he said, âWhere will you stay in London?â

âAt the flat. In Chelsea.â

âYou shared that with Maples.â

âYes. Itâs a large flat. Billy had it put in both our names.â

âThat was decent of him.â

âHe was like that.â Brunner smiled rather wearily. âYouâre not

going to suggest I killed him for a piece of real estate?â

It did sound absurd the way he said it.

âYouâre thinking we were partners? Gay?â

âNo, I wasnâtâ¦â

âOthers seemed to.â

âIâve seen the flat. Itâs spacious.â

Kurt gave him a questioning look. âYou had a warrant?â

Jury smiled. âYou sound like my boss. We had one.â

Brunner ran the toe of his shoe around a figure in the Turkish carpet. âI hope you were careful.â

âPolice are pretty careful.â

Kurt Brunner said nothing.

Jury said, âYou told us you were in Germany whenââ

âBerlin.â Brunner looked aggrieved. âI came back on that day, or rather that afternoon. Perhaps if I hadnât leftâ¦well, I wonât get over that very easily.â

âNo, I expect not. Thatâs one of the hardest things to accept, that we werenât there, that we might have been able to prevent it. Though you couldnât have.â

They sat in silence for a few moments.

Jury said, âYou were in Berlin for how long?â

âFive or six days. Six.â

Jury had his notebook out. He made a note. âWould you have your passport with you?â

Kurt Brunner gave Jury a queer look. âWhy?â

âIâd like to see it.â

Brunner frowned. âThatâs not much of an answer.â

âI know.â

âIt isnât here; itâs in Sloane Street. I went there first, dropped off a few things.â

âWhy didnât you come directly here? I mean, the Chunnelâs much closer to Rye than it is to Londonâ¦?â He left the question hanging.

Sitting forward and leaning his forearms on his knees, Brunner locked his hands as if they were playing the old nursery rhyme of âThis is the steeple.â

Jury sat looking at him. Then he said, âI think, Mr. Brunner, you know more about your past than youâre saying.â

âWhat does my past have to do with this?â

âPerhaps a great deal.â

âWhat do I know that Iâm not telling you?â

âWell, I believe you remember what happened to your brother. I mean exactly what happened, not some vague report of its being a World War Two shooting.â

âWhat are you saying?â

Jury watched Brunnerâs eyes change from dark amber to the color of weak tea.

âMy God! You think I shot Josef? You think I did it?â

Jury was completely surprised by this response. âNo, no. Not at all. You were only a child. Why would I think that?â

âBecause you seem to be implying thereâs something so dreadful in the killing of Josef I must recall it.â

âOther circumstances might do the same thing.â

âWhat?â

âLike seeing him shot right in front of you.â

Kurt Brunner fell back in his chair as if he himself had been shot. âThat couldnât have happened.â

âYes.â

âI donât remember it.â

Jury thought for a moment, looking at him. âIâll admit it is possible that you were so traumatized you shut it out of consciousness. Thatâs possible. And, of course, you were very young.â

âItâs what happened. If those were the circumstances. I just find it hard to believe. And, anyway, what has this to do with Billyâs murder?â

âA lot.â Jury checked his watch. âIâm starving. Shall we get a bite to eat? There must be a decent pub around.â

âThereâs always a decent pub.â Brunner smiled and rose, and they left.

THIRTY-SEVEN

They stood first at the bar, got tired of that, picked up their drinks, and settled at a table where, now, the remains of two cheese and pickle sandwiches sat before them.

âI met Billy in Munich six years ago,â said Kurt. âI was teaching at one of the international schools, history, my specialty, Russian. Iâd been there for a decade and was growing more and more dissatisfied.â He moved his hand and brushed condensation from the table. âI met Billy sitting at a bar in Alexanderplatz. We exchanged a few words about the city, Billy saying he had just visited the most boring show in history at a fashionable gallery. Some artist named Rio Bravura. I really liked the name, I told him. Wasnât that the name of an American Western with Dean Martin or John Wayne? No, he told me, that was *Rio Bravo,* and probably the artist Bravura had seen it several times. He didnât look much like Dean Martin, but he drank like him, that was certain.

âBilly went on about the paintings and the painter who was, not surprisingly, insufferable. It was a hell of a rant, but I found him superb company, really. We talked about Greek drama and so forth, and all in all, we shut the place down. That done, we went in search of something still open. I swear to God, Billy never stopped talking. He was extremely intelligent. He was manic.â Kurt gave a short laugh.

âWe got together several times after that over the next year. Iâd told him I was going to jettison the teaching and he asked me to work for him. And here I am. He said he needed somebody to run things.â

Jury watched the cigarette in the tin ashtray smolder and slowly burn down to ash; he almost reached over to pick it up. It had been nearly three years since heâd smoked and he was still like this. He heard Brunner, of course, but his eye was on that line of ash. What was it, he wondered, that was hidden in those ashes?

âSo thatâs my role: running things.â Kurt noticed the ash end of the cigarette and tipped it into the tray. He looked at Jury. âYou were a smoker.â

Jury leaned back. âI was. Stopped almost three years ago and I still lust after them.â

Kurt shrugged, said matter-of-factly, âMaybe itâs not cigarettes you really lust after. There are things you never get over. People whoâve never been addicts couldnât understand this. At first, itâs like feeling saved, and then you find that you arenât. Youâre still lost. Wouldnât it be better not to have felt it in the first place? I think the trouble is we donât know what it meant in the first place. Cigarettes, booze, loveâ¦?â

Kurt lit another cigarette and turned the lighter in slow arcs.

Jury said, âYou lived in the flat in Sloane Street together?â

Brunner picked up his pint and took a drink and set it down. âYouâve already asked that. Iâve already answered.â Brunner added, âWhy would you think Billy was gay, anyway? He had a woman, after all. Iâm sure youâve talked to her.â

Jury nodded. âYou mean Angela Riffley.â

Brunner studied the coal end of his cigarette. âYes. Sheâs really something.â

Jury nodded, smiling. âItâs hard to know whatâs really going on with her. How much is she hiding or is she hiding anything? Am I too stupid to see through her or is there anything to see?â

Kurt laughed. âThatâs Angela. Her talent is to obfuscate.â

âHas she really done all of the things she says sheâs done?â

âI doubt it, but there again, how can you know?â

âSheâs extremely attractive, but somehow I canât imagine taking her seriously. You know, in the long run, I mean.â

âThatâs because youâve got good sense.â

Jury wanted to laugh.

âBilly hadnât; Billy wanted someone with a mind to spar with, to trade theories with. Billy had about as much understanding of what marriage is all about as a radish.â

Kurt turned the lighter over and over, edge tapping the table at each revolution. Nervous.

At least thatâs what Jury thought. âHow long had they been together?â

âSomething over a year, I think.â

âAnd did he propose marriage?â

Kurt stopped turning the lighter over. âI honestly donât know. I doubt it. Does she say he did?â

âNotâ¦exactly.â

They both laughed at that.

Jury said, âI canât imagine Angela Riffley telling one anything directly.â

Kurt nodded. âAnd yet I think one might also underestimate her. Sheâs pretty sharp.â Looking into his nearly empty glass, he said, âBilly needed someone to shake some sense into him occasionally.â He smiled. âIâm good at that.â He paused, then said, âBilly lived his life at fever pitch: crisis was always just around the corner. Armageddon, that was up the road.â Kurt drank off his beer.

Jury asked, âWhat did running things entail?â

âFor Billy? Oh, records, engagements, money, charities, upkeep. Thereâs an astonishing amount of record keeping, even in the simplest lives, and Billyâs wasnât simple.â He picked up his pint glass, empty long enough that traces of foam had dried along the ridges. âWe need another.â Brunner stood.

Jury went to stop him. âWait. My turn.â

Kurt was up and holding both glasses. âDo we really care?â He walked off toward the bar.

Jury sat there wondering. Did he? Did he care about the simple ritual of getting the drinks. Maybe. Maybe rituals like buying drinks were worth caring about.

The fresh pint appeared before him, and Kurt sat down with his own.

Jury said, âDid you like this arrangement with Billy?â

Kurt took a drink, set down his pint before he answered. âAbsolutely. I donât mind that sort of paperwork; Iâm used to it, to keeping records, sorting things, you know. And the rest of itâwell, that was hardly work.â

In his voice was a note that made Jury want to pursue it, but he didnât. âBilly didnât leave a will.â

âApparently.â Kurt drank his beer.

âThat doesnât make any difference to you?â

âHeâs dead. Thatâs the only difference.â

âHe apparently had quite a fortune. You donât care?â

âYouâve tried in six different ways to get an answer from me that would satisfy you.â He smiled. âThe answerâs still no. Sorry, youâll just have to stand it.â He scraped some coins off the table into his

hand.

âIâve got to collect my sergeant and get back to London.â Jury glanced at his watch. âMy God. Itâs nearly eightââ Desperate, he pulled out his mobile phone to call Phyllis Nancy, then found that it had run out of power. âDo you have a mobile?â

âHere.â Kurt handed his over.

Jury called Phyllis, who didnât answer, and left a message of apology and excuse: the case he was working on had kept him in Rye. He would call her, or better, see her in the morning. He clapped the phone shut and handed it back to Kurt.

âMissed date?â Kurt held the door and they passed through it to the street.

âI donât know how I could have forgotten. Damn it.â

âPerhaps the thought of slapping the cuffs on me.â

âThat would do it.â

âOr simply the devilishly fascinating conversation.â

Jury smiled. He realized he seemed to have moved off from the position of regarding Kurt Brunner as prime suspect.

Either Brunner was a talented actor or Jury was dead wrong.

THE LESSON OF THE MASTER

THIRTY-EIGHT

âIt wouldnât be the first time,â said Harry Johnson, raising his glass.

It was half-eleven in the Old Wine Shades.

âVery funny, Harry. You always were a card. But when it comes to you Iâm not wrong.â He didnât raise his glass.

He hadnât been able to get hold of Phyllis. His mobile phone was now charged and on. As soon as he clapped it shut it rang. It must be her.

Harry raised an eyebrow. ââThree Blind Miceâ?â

âThatâs right. All we need is one more.â He pressed the phone to his ear. âJury.â

There was a silence. He hoped it wasnât an angry one. âPhyllis?â

âItâs not Phyllis,â said Lu Aguilar. âI donât know where she is, sorry. But Iâm at Dust.â The phone died before Jury could say anything.

Not that that would have made any difference. He snapped the phone shut. His head began to throb. He rubbed his temple.

âSomething wrong?â

He shook his head. He felt the stare. It wasnât Harry; Harry had turned away and was looking at the row of wine bottles, smoking happily away.

Jury looked down. Mungo was out from under the bar chair. Mungoâs eyes were boring into Jury.

âWell? If youâve something to say, say it. Not you,â Jury said when Harry turned.

Harry looked down at Mungo and snorted. âHeâs giving you his double-down stare. Thatâs how he looks at me when Iâm at the blackjack table.â Studying Juryâs expression, he added, âHeâs usually right, too.â

âThanks.â

âYou donât waste words, if that call is any proof.â

Words, thought Jury, between Lu Aguilar and him, *what good would they do?*

âIâll guess from your response it was the kidnapper with his ransom demand.â

Jury half smiled. âNo, Harry. Iâd say thatâs more up your street, kidnapping. And murder, of course, letâs not forget that.â

âLetâs do. You always work your way around to that tired subject.â He swapped his cigarette for a small cigar and lit it.

Everyone in the bloody world smoked except him, chain-smoked even. He wouldnât be surprised to see Mungo light up.

âIt must be frustrating as hell not having a lick of evidence.â Harry held up his hand and gestured to Trevor, who slapped his bar towel over his shoulder and came down the bar. âIâd like a Chevalier-Montrachet, Trev. I donât much care for this stuff.â He held up his glass. âNot corky, is it?â

Trevor fixed Harry with such a dire stare, Jury laughed. As if he, Trevor, could possibly serve a wine in less than perfect condition. âIâll just ignore that, Mr. Johnson.â

âBut you wonât forget it, will you?â said Jury.

âOh, no. Itâs my reputationâs at stake.â

Harry smiled. Trevor tried not to and went in search of Harryâs wine.

Jury said, âYou see, itâs just that sort of thing thatâll sink you in the end, Harry. You shouldnât be taking chances with Trevor; youâll wind up with cyanide in your Chevalier-Montrachet.â

âDonât sound so hopeful.â

âOh, Iâm very hopeful. All I need is a search warrant.â

âThatâs what you needed over two weeks ago and you didnât get one.â Harry smiled. âSo I see no reason you would now. Indeed, you were directed not to get within a hundred yards of my house, werenât you?â

âThatâs right.â

âWell, watch your step or Iâll tell. I knew youâd been nosing around there the moment I got home that night. Thatâs the reason you wanted your pal to distract me. Very clever, I have to say.â

Jury snickered. âWhat pal?â

âYou know, the Niels Bohr chap.â

âOh, him. Just some nutcase. Why? Do you want to have another chat with him?â Jury checked his watch. âGot to go.â He slid out of

the bar chair. âYou know the villains that get caught first? The clever ones.â

Actually, those were the ones who got caught last.

THIRTY-NINE

He told himself not to do this, that he could still walk away, knowing he would and he couldnât.

Jury parked where he had parked before, in St. Jamesâs Green. He got out and locked the car. Then he unlocked it and tossed his mobile phone on the seat and locked the car again.

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She was sitting alone at the bar, not chatting up the barman this time. The barman at the moment was nowhere in evidence. A glass holding a finger of whiskey sat before her. She was smoking a cigarette and looking straight ahead, at the bottles on the glass shelves or the mirror, as Harry had been doing at the wine bar twenty minutes earlier. She didnât see him until he was there pulling out the stool beside her.

She smiled what for Lu was a bounteous smile, since she seldom smiled at all. He would like to know why she took things so seriously. She stubbed out her cigarette and fanned away whatever smoke was hanging between them.

âYou went to Rye.â

It wasnât conjecture; it was Lu getting down to business, although business was not the reason sheâd called. âYou talked to the Maples family.â Nor was this a question. She assumed he was doing his job.

âYes. I was redrawing the parameters of whatâs yours and whatâs mine.â

She turned on the stool, and he could get her full face. âItâs all both of ours.â Her look was level. âWeâre not competing. I told you that.â

âWe arenât? Whereâs Ty or anyone who has ten minutes to devote to the customers in here?â

Lu pushed her glass toward him. âHere.â

Jury didnât pick it up. âDid you call me here to compare notes about Roderick and Olivia Maples?â

âNo.â She made a sound in her throatâannoyance, or just clearing it. âYou know why I called you. But in the meantime, we can talk.â

âIn the meantime before what time?â

Lu rolled her eyes. âHas anyone ever told you you can be awfully childish?â

âYes. What were you saying?â He reached over and moved a strand of flyaway hair from her cheek, pushed it back with his finger.

âMaples. I thought little of Olivia except that sheâs grasping, and I find it hard to believe Billy Maples would find her very lovable.â

âWho said he did?â

âShe did. To hear her tell it, he had a hard time keeping his hands off her,â said Lu.

âI doubt that. You went to see Rose Ames, but you havenât talked to Billyâs grandfather, have you?â

She shook her head and drank the remaining whiskey. There wasnât much. âYou knew him before. I wanted you to do it.â She put her fingers on Juryâs wrist, his hand lying on the bar. âIs it important, what he told you?â

âAbsolutely. The most important of all.â

âTell me.â She leaned toward him.

âSir Oswald Maples was a significant figure at Bletchley Park during the war.â

âCodes.â

Jury nodded. âRoderickâs not his son by birth. Heâs the son of a high-ranking Nazi SS officerââ

âWhat?â She was half off her stool, eyes wide.

He told her.

âJesus. But are you sure it was Brunnerâs brother?â

âSir Oswald is quite sure and heâs extremely thorough when it comes to gathering evidence.â

Her dark eyes seemed to swim with the knowledge of this. He tried turning away from the eyes, as he told her the rest of it, but he was soon back in their dark depths.

They did not seem to be exchanging information anymore; they were exchanging something else. Jury stopped in the middle of this recitation and said, âWhat are we doing?â

âGoing.â Lu was sliding the strap of her bag over her shoulder.

She started to get up, but Jury put his hand on her shoulder to stop her.

âLuââ

âLook, Richard, we can, if you like, sit here until the club closes and then go. It doesnât matter; weâd end up in the same place either way.â She rose again. âYouâre scared, and itâs not about the job, the case, the professionalism or lack of it, or our working together. Come on.â She took a step and, seeing he still sat there, stopped and put a hand on his shoulder. âRichard, I know all that because itâs the way I feel. Thereâs nothing I can do about it. There was nothing I could do about it from the moment I walked into that room at the Zetter. Thereâs nothing you can do about it, either. If I believed in fate, Iâd say thatâs what it is.â

âBut you donât believe itâs fate.â

âI believe thereâs nothing we can do. Choice has sod-all to do with it.â

He got up, threw some money on the bar, still with no one around to collect it, and walked out with her.

They walked from Dust to St. Jamesâs Green in silence. When they reached the car, Lu put her arms around him and gave him a huge hug. âThatâs better.â

âUh-huh. Only this time, can we keep the noise down? My neighbor downstairs told me it sounded as if the furniture removal men kept dropping things.â

Her face pressed against his shoulder, she said, âYouâre the one knocked over the coffee table and the lamp.â

âLike hell I did.â He kissed her for a long time.

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The living room furniture remained intact and untouched, except for the initial impact when they first came into the room, with Jury pressing her against the back of the sofa, almost tipping the two of them over.

After that it was strictly the bedroom and the broken nightstand, the broken lamp, the torn blind, the spilled wastebasket, the car keys, change, and comb sliding from the bureau, to say nothing of the bunched bed clothes, the sheets twisted and rising up in the middle of the bed as if theyâd been shot from a geyser. The storm.

When they finally fell down on the bed again, they were exhausted.

Jury fell asleep.

Again, he did not hear her leave. Again, the trail of her clothes had been collected, item by item.

He felt, sadly, without that trail, he might never track her down.

Forty

The long sad face of Father Martin regarded Jury ruefully the following morning as they stood near the altar. âIâm glad to see you again, Superintendent, but nothingâs changed.â

The priest stood in his vestments, just having completed the baptism of an infant girl. From the shadows at the rear of the church, Jury had watched as the baby wailed at the touch of the water sluiced over her head. The mother had quickly received the infant back into her arms and bounced it up and down. The father had looked on, neutral and uninvolved.

âIâm still curious, Father, about that night when you bumped into my friend and me.â

âI thought weâd settled about that.â

âSettled? I donât think so. Had you been coming not from Dust but from the Zetter? Theyâre very near each other.â Jury could tell Martin was trying to assemble his answers, one after another, like shards of a splintered mirror. He knew he couldnât fix it. The best he could do with this one was, âI expect thatâs right.â

âYouâre not sure?â

Irritated, Father Martin said, âNo, of course Iâm sure. I imagine Iâd just got times mixed up. I was having dinner at the Zetter. Itâs quite well known for its food.â

âBy yourself?â

âYes. Itâs rather pricey. I donât eat there often.â

âThis was just before we passed in Jerusalem Passage?â

The priest nodded.

âBut that would have been almost eleven. The dining room was still open?â

âNot for people to be seated, no. But there were a few diners sitting having coffee and after-dinner drinks.â

âAnd you rushed out.â

âNot right then. Iâd already left the restaurant when I remembered I was supposed to be back at the house for a telephone call. And before you ask, Iâm sorry I cannot tell you who the call was from or the nature of the call. Itâs information given me in confidence.â

âWhich means of course that I canât check up on it?â He smiled. âMeaning, itâs like the confessional, isnât it? I donât think thatâll fly, Father. We can subpoena telephone records. Too bad we canât do the same with confessions.â

âYou donât believe me.â

âNo, I donât.â

Father Martin rose, and Jury after him. âI can say no more about it, Superintendent. But perhaps you can share with me what I was doing, since you donât think I was having dinner.â He drew off the stole and the cassock.

âI donât know. I only know what Iâm pretty sure you werenât doing and that was moving that fast in order to take a phone call. You were running from something, and as thereâd just been a murder in the Zetter, Iâd guess you were running from that.

âWhether you were supposed to meet Billy Maples there or whether you went there of your own accord, I donât know. You walked in, didnât see the body. The room service waiter didnât either because it was out on the terrace. You went out there and thatâs when you saw him. Dead at your feet. I can imagine your fright. You got out fast. But thereâs another account of your actions that is less attractive: you shot him yourself. Billy had been waiting for someone to join him. Was it you?â

Father Martin smiled. It was an unnerving smile that appeared to say Jury was so dead wrong it was just short of laughter. âYou really think I could have murdered Billy?â

âNot necessarily. I think you were there; Iâd like to know why. Were you lovers?â

The priest did laugh now. âNo. Iâm not gay. Neither was Billy, as far as I know.â

âBut thatâs the point. How far would that be? You were obviously connected to him in some way other than just priest and penitent.â

Father Martin sighed deeply. âVery well. I was there and, no, I didnât shoot Billy. Iâd talked to him earlier, on the phone, and he sounded very down. I thought Iâd just stop in and see him, see how he was. Yes, I did see him. Blood had pooled under him. My reactionâI

canât describeââ He stopped and ran his hand across his forehead and breathed deeply.

âI checked to make sure there was no sign of lifeâlistened for a heartbeat, checked his pulse, evenâwell, this sounds ridiculousâ¦â

âI canât imagine anything relating to this that would.â

âThere was a small mirror on a shelf there. I held it to his lips. You know, like Lear did with Cordelia. I *knew* he was dead the moment I saw him, yet I still did these things.â

Jury thought he sounded immensely sad. âSo he was expecting you?â

âWhat? No, he wasnât.â

âHe was expecting someone at ten.â

âWell, I wasnât the one. Iâd just gone there on impulse. I left the room and went down in the elevator. I didnât rush out. I didnât even leave. Instead, I went to the desk and asked if the restaurant was still open. The young woman there nodded, said theyâd be closing in a bit. I was shown to a table and ordered and that was all, until I did leave and ran into you. But I wasnât literally running, Superintendent. I was walking pretty fast, I grant you.â

Jury was looking at him and shaking his head. âAnd you didnât call the management, the police, *someone.*â

âNo. Iâm not proud of my behavior.â

âI would think not. Yet you stick fast to principle when it comes to the confessional. How bloody strange. Well, since you wonât tell me what was going on with Billy that made him want to confess, Iâll tell you.â

Father Martin smiled. âThat would be a relief.â He indicated a pew. âCare to sit down?â

âNot really. What really irritates me is that it wasnât really âconfession,â was it? I mean, not in the strict sense of the term?â

âIt did take place in the confessional.â

âSo either Billy or you suggested that. I donât care which. Billy told you about his grandfather, the real one, the one by blood, the Nazi officer. He told you about the paintings, didnât he?â The priest hesitated. Then he nodded. âHe did, yes. Billy apparently had the sort of conscience that few people have: guilt over what someone else has done.â

âI agree with you; that sort of thing is quite rare.â

âFor Billy, it was close to obsession. Would you agree with that?â

âI would. I might say âconsumedâ by it. I worried about him, you

see. Thatâs why I went to the Zetter. He called earlier and was talking about all of this.â

âI thought you said he wasnât expecting you at ten.â

âHe wasnât, no. I offered to come, but he said, no, he was going to bed early, he needed to sleep.â

âSo you werenât the one.â

âNo.â

Jury sighed. âI donât know if something like Billyâs state of mind can be caused by depression. He appears to have been manic-depressive. Or if itâs by way of beingâstrange to sayâa kind of spiritual gift.â

Father Martin looked at him. âNor do I, Mr. Jury.â

Jury looked up at the statue of Mary, looked up at the Brunelleschi-like ceiling. âI wish Iâd known him.â

âWhat makes you think you donât?â

âDonât give me another conundrum, Father. Iâm sick of mystery.â

Father Martin laughed.

FORTY-ONE

What Melrose couldnât understand about the Ververs was, one: how much they knew, and, two: whether Henry James meant us to see that Maggie Verver was guilty in the worst of ways of being a manipulator.

He was reading *The Golden Bowl,* among others. There were five books lying splayed on the arms of sofas and chairs in this sitting room and one on the dining room table. He would pick up one, read a few pages, then another. No wonder he was confused.

Nevertheless, it was difficult maneuvering around Jamesâs territory; one could so easily lose oneâs moorings and find oneself in a small boat in choppy waters, unsure as to where land absolutely lay. (Was he beginning to sound even in his thoughts like a Jamesian character?)

But that was it, wasnât it? Thatâs how Charlotte and Amerigo must have felt, trying to steer their little boat in the wake of Maggie and Adam Ververâs colossal yacht.

He rose and walked into the dining room. He peered out of the window at the beautiful garden and the fine day. He picked up a collection of short stories that lay on the buffet and continued reading âThe Jolly Corner.â It was a little irritating that Jury remembered it so well.

âMrs. Jessup!â He called this toward the kitchen.

Smiling, Mrs. Jessup came through the swing door, looking very cooklike in an apron so white it sparkled. âSir?â

âCould I have a cup of coffee? Just that, thanks. You neednât bring all the paraphernalia.â

âWhy, yes, sir.â She turned and pushed back through the door.

Melrose went back to âThe Jolly Corner,â reading it standing, on the spot, as he did much of the time. He stood this way for ten minutes and until Mrs. Jessup was back with the cup and all the

paraphernalia: coffeepot, jug of hot milk, sugar, biscuits.

He wondered if the word âbiscuitâ had been drummed into the mind of every man, woman, and child in Britain at birth. It seemed so entrenched that it was simply impossible to serve a cup of tea or coffee without biscuits.

âThank you, Mrs. Jessupâ¦No, Iâll pour. Remember, there are people coming to see the house at four, so afternoon tea will be a little late.â Melrose *loved* his afternoon tea now that Agatha wasnât there to share it.

Â

The visit had been set up by a National Trust representative, who apologized profusely for the inconvenience. âThis is what is usually done by our tenantsâshowing visitors through the downstairs roomsâbut as youâre just filling in as a favor to the Trust, well, we canât expect you to do the whole dog and pony show.â She laughed.

Melrose took the receiver from his ear and stared at it. Dog and pony show? At Lamb House? Really!

âI do appreciate your letting them come, Lord Ardry, as theyâre great supporters of the Trust and have to go back to Kingâs Lynn this evening and this is their only chanceââ On she went, ending with, âYou neednât feel obliged to say a word. They can just look.â

Again, Melrose glared at the receiver. Not *say* anything? *Was* the woman *mad*? Here he was with Lamb House on his watch, as they say, with Henry James himself under his stewardship, with many of the Masterâs goods and chattels to protect.

Not say anything? Just thinking on this had him making that dismissive blubbery sound with his lips. Of course, heâd *say*!

Â

Here they were now on the Lamb House doorstep. Melrose had been told by the Trust person there would be three in the party, a couple and their daughter. The couple appeared in the doorway on time, with their daughter, unfortunately, of a sullen aspect and, worse, the aspect of a child of only seven, possibly eight. Why had the couple brought the girl to see Lamb House? Obviously because they had no place to park her, so here she was.

There were few children in Jamesâs books except for the famous duo of *The Turn of the Screw,* and even there they struck the reader as so preternaturally smart they seemed like stunted versions of the

adults. Henry apparently did not find children useful, and no wonder. This one, with her bobbed brown hair cut straight as a razor all round was licking a lollipop of swirling, neon-bright colors. The child seemed to regard this missionâinvestigating strange peopleâs housesâas a means to torture her into being good on the way back to Kingâs Lynn. It was clear from the way she regarded Melrose over the top of her psychedelic lolly that it wouldnât work.

He smiled thinly. âIâm so awfully sorry, but I donât think lollipops are a good idea for going round the many books and portraits and so forth in the rooms.â

The mother was quite adamant. âDonât worry about Minnie. Minnieâs a careful girl. We explained everything to her.â

The father, Mr. Babcock, looked on darkly, as if unconvinced anything good could come of this visit.

Mrs. Babcock looked round the entrance hall and claimed it to be quite tasteful, quite pleasant. Melrose held out his arm to herd them into the little parlor on the right and began explaining to them the various photos, illustrations, caricatures hanging on the walls. He did this while keeping an eye on Minnie, who had slipped the noose and was inspecting on her own. She hung, as did the lolly, over the open notebook on the desk, turning over a page, then peering closer, turning over another, all the while the lollipop missing the pages by a hair.

âChild!â said Melrose, in his best Victorian manner. âIâm afraid I must ask you not to handle the notebook. Itâs of great value.â

âOh, Minnie wonât hurt it; sheâs always so careful; isnât that right, Minnie?â

That was so far from being right, even Minnie knew it. The look she turned on Melrose was not so much triumphant as coercive. *You best stick with me, poor sod.* She turned back to the book.

Said Mr. Babcock: âWhatâs all this, then?â He was looking at the caricature of Henry James done by Cruikshank.

âItâs rather good, isnât it?â Mr. Babcock sounded much more Tyne and Wear than Kingâs Lynn. He was leaning toward the glass, close enough to fog it. âTell me,â said Melrose, âwhat is your particular interest in Henry James?â

Mr. Babcock leaned back. âMe? Oh, not me; itâs the wife here wanted to come. Mildredâs got some idea she has to see all the stately homes, all the famous peopleâs homes; all the monuments; all the portraits; all the statues, bronze, wax, or wood; all the flowers in the

Chelsea Flower Show; and is keeping a record. Well, you get the idea.â

Did Melrose ever get the idea! âIâm exhausted just listening to that agenda,â he said.

Mr. Babcockâs laugh was a roar, truncated, fortunately.

âReally, Bob,â said Mrs. Babcock. She had a tight little ferret face and used wretchedly precise diction, mouth and words meeting like a row of snaps on a taut bodice. âAnd did Mr. James live out his final days here?â

âNo,â said Melrose, rather taken aback to begin with the authorâs death. âNo. He died in London, at his house in Cheyne Walk.â

âWas he as popular as Mr. Dickens?â

Not only his death, but his competition. âOh, no. Charles Dickens was the most popular writer of his day. The most popular writer in the *world,* actually.â

âThat explains why heâs been on the telly.â

âOh,â said Melrose with a generous gesture of his arm, taking in the room, âso has Mr. James!â

Again, the narrowed look was fixed on him. âWhat was it, which book was on the telly? A miniseries, was it?â

âWhyâât had to be soââ*The Turn of the Screw.â* When she gave him an uncomprehending look, he said, âSurely, you recall that, featuring the two *awful children.*â He would make that clear, but in the course of it he realized Minnie wasnât there to hear it. âWhereâs your daughter?â

Minnie had vanished. How long had she been gone?

But Mrs. Babcock didnât care, apparently; she was ruminating over television.

Mr. Babcock looked a little alarmed. âNow whereâs that girl got to?â

The answer came as if from God in a thunderclap. The sound of an avalanche of pots and pans and plates clattering away.

âThe kitchen!â exclaimed Melrose, who led the way, Minnieâs father on his heels.

Mrs. Jessupâs face was so suffused with blood and rage Melrose was afraid sheâd have a stroke. What had been overturned was a pastry table that had held cake pans, cookie sheets, bowls, and plates, all once full and all on the floor. Minnieâs mouth was covered with cake crumbs and chocolate frosting.

âWhy I never saw anything like it! Wasnât I only trying to take her

off your hands with tea and cake, and she turns round and does this?â The sweep of her arm took in the wreckage. âAll my nice cakes and tarts on the floor! Shoved them straight off the table, she did, and then upset the table itself!â

âOh, lud,â said Minnieâs father.

But Minnie herself did not seem in the least disturbed.

Mr. Babcock went to her, yanked her arm, and quick stepped her out of the kitchen, making profuse apologies to the cook for his daughterâs execrable behavior.

Melrose righted the table while Mrs. Jessup shook and shook her head. âSheâs a devil, Lord Ardry, thatâs all there is to it.â

âIâll be right back,â said Melrose and left the kitchen for the front of the house. There he heard from Mrs. Babcock: ââ¦oughtnât toâve been feeding the child cake, not with her blood sugar crazy as it isâ¦well, itâs no wonder, is it?â

Melrose came up behind her. âBlood sugar?â

Mrs. Babcock swerved and regarded him with steely eyes. âHer systemâs just short of being diabetic!â

âOh? Is that why youâre buying her lollipops?â

Mrs. Babcock stiffened and bristled even more. Melrose could have buffed his boots with her. âEvery childâs got to have a treat now and then.â

âWell, donât worry about her blood sugar. Iâm sure Dracula would be delighted to give her another transfusion.â He smiled a deathâs head smile.

Her mouth dropped open. She sputtered a little and then brought out, âWell, I never! Donât think I wonât report this to the Trust! Youâll see!â

âMadam, I am under no obligation to the National Trust. Iâm doing them a favor by being here. Now, I suggest you do them an equal favor and get out.â He strode to the door and flung itâhe made sure it flungâopen dramatically.

Mr. Babcock muttered an apology as they went through it.

Minnie treated Melrose to a sticky, stuck-out tongue.

FORTY-TWO

Mrs. Jessup was trying to salvage her dayâs baking as best she could, picking up her tarts and cakes, when Melrose returned to the kitchen.

âWell, thatâs the last of the Babcocks,â he said. âLet me help you.â He knelt to shovel some cookies back onto a cookie sheet.

âYouâd just as well throw those out.â She was collecting cutlery and talking at fever-pitch about the way children were being raised these days. âWhy, if any of us when we was kids wouldâve acted like that, weâd not be able to sit down for a week! Weâdâve got a proper thrashing. Well, I canât really imagine it because itâd never have happened. Youâll pardon me, sir, but I just canât get over the sight of her pushing my tarts and cakes onto the floor!â

From his kneeling position, Melrose looked up at her. âWhy donât you just sit down for a while, Mrs. Jessup?â

She paid no attention to this, but started busying herself at the big kitchen sink, while Melrose salvaged a lemon tart and tried to steer the subject away from Minnie. âSo you had a large family, did you?â

âDid have, yes, sir, fairly big. There were three of us girls, Dora, the eldest, and a brother, Bertie.â

âThatâs quite a nice number of siblings.â He inspected a ruined seed cake, not for the first time wishing he hadnât been an only child. âDo they live near you?â

âTwo of themâs dead, two sisters. Drowned, both of them.â

âHow awful. That must have been a black day for your parents as well as yourself.â Melrose seemed to recall Wigginsâs saying something about this. âWere you at the beach?â

âNo, sir. Happened during the war. A ship was evacuating us kidsâI mean a lot of usâto Canada and it went down. The doomed voyage is what they called it.â

âIâm so sorry.â He frowned.

She shrugged. âIt was a long long time ago. I only thought of all that because of that dreadful child.â She plunked a pot into the sink. âTheyâll be sorry, her mum and dad, when the girl grows up to be a selfish, cold-blooded, joy-riding specimen.â

Mrs. Jessup was on a rant, a woman of a much more fiery aspect than Melrose had seen before. âLook, why donât you rest for a while? Put your feet up. Go home if you like. The cakes and tarts can wait until tomorrow.â

Hardly before the first of this was spoken, Mrs. Jessup was shaking her head and kept on shaking it. âNo, sir, thank you anyway. Todayâs my baking day, and I do want it done.â Her small-muscled arms were busy with a flour sack, some of which she was measuring out into a basin. âI expect Iâm a creature of habit, but Iâll tell you this, sirââshe was returning the flour to the nether regions of a big old wardrobeââhabit, force oâ habit is what saves us in the end. If you always do what you promised yourself youâd do, well, youâll be all right.â

Melrose couldnât imagine anything less likely. He preferred to train others up in the art of habit, at least when it came to attending to him. His cook, Martha, for example, was to make a habit of putting only store-bought fairy cakes on the tea tray for his aunt. His hermit, Mr. Blodgett, was to make a habit of appearing at the drawing room windows when Agatha was there. Melroseâs goat, Aghast, and his horse, Aggrieved, were to make a habit of awaiting his appearance with carrots.

And his little circle of friendsâah, yes, they were to gather, habitually, at 11:00 and 6:00 in the Jack and Hammer.

Theo Wrenn Browne was to make a habit of being an idiot.

The list went on and on. He hadnât realized until the good Mrs. Jessup had made a point of it how habit played so large a part in his life. Yes, habitualness was a virtue, as long as it wasnât his virtue. âYouâre quite right, Mrs. Jessup, never a truer word, et cetera.â

She smiled for the first time since the onerous child had sent her Banbury tarts and Eccles cakes and Maids of Honor flying.

He picked up a currant bun and moved over to the window facing the wide lawn. The rain had ceased and the gray afternoon rendered the garden beautiful and disconsolate. The bugle-shaped, rich red Campsis; the roses and jasmine all climbing the high old brick wall; the flower beds of bulbs, lilies, and lavender bordering the lawn; the trees, shrubs, and high hedges: no wonder Henry James had loved

living here, what consummate tranquillity for a writer.

He said, still looking out, âI think Billy Maples must have loved this place.â

âHe seemed to, and thatâs the truth.â

âItâs very odd but no one can fathom why he took up the lease. A citified young man such as he, buried away in this village?â

âItâs because he was so fond of Henry James.â

Surprised, Melrose turned to see that she had rolled out the pie dough and was now covering up the apple mixture sheâd assembled.

âHe did?â

âThatâs what he read. He was always reading one of those books. Whenever I took in breakfast or afternoon tea, there heâd be with a Henry James book. He told me Henry James wrote his three greatest books here. I donât rememberâ¦was one *The Golden Bough*?â

Mrs. Jessup seemed to be sharing the volume with Diane Demorney. â*The Golden Bowl,*â said Melrose.

âYes, thatâs it. And then there were two others. What were they called?â

â*The Wings of the Dove* and *The Ambassadors.â*

She was crimping the edges of the piecrust. âHe said once, thatâs what theyâre like, families. Manipulating and vicious.â

âMy goodness. Thatâs rather strong language. Do you suppose he was referring to his own family?â

She gave an abrupt laugh. âWinkâs as good as a nod, there!â

âDid you ever meet any of them?â

âOh, yes. You know the type: never wanted for nothing, spoiled, rich, opinionatedââ She was off on another rant. âBilly, I have to say, was awful spoiled. Thereâs things heâd eat and more things he wouldnât; those heâd see, and those he wouldnât. I couldnât understand the lad, he was that moody.â She chuckled.

Well, she was back in good humor, Melrose was glad to see. âThey, him and Mr. Brunner, went to that tomato-throwing placeâsuch nonsense, donât you think?âin that little town in Spain. You know, where they keep throwing tomatoes for hours and everybodyâs covered in them.â She chuckled again. âNever wanted to see another tomato as long as he lived. I couldnât even make spaghettiâme, I love spaghetti, though I canât say I do most Italian food.â She shook her head and chuckled again. âTomato throwing. Can you imagine grown-ups spending their time doing something so silly?â

âOh, I donât knowââ

But she cut off his tomato reflection. âThe worst of them was that grandmother. Would have thought she was the queen. She acted like she owned himâwell, his mother was deadâthat was Mr. Roderickâs first wife. At any rate, the grandmother was always talking to him about her, thatâd be her own daughter, Mary. Talking on and on and naturally putting him off his stepmother. Still, I guess that stepmother isnât much to write home about. Mrs. Amesâthe granâgave him money hand over fist, which he turned around and spent the same way.â She shook her head. âYou oughtnât to do that with a lad.â

Considering Melrose had been pretty much in the same hand-over-fist boat, he didnât comment. Well, but heâd turned out all right, hadnât he?

âWhat about his father?â

âMr. Roderick? Oh, I expect heâs all right. Would be if he wasnât married to that dreadful woman. Iâm surprised you came back in one piece.â

Melrose was astonished. Heâd never imagined Mrs. Jessup capable of such a louche judgment.

She went on, âWell, you were there. Donât tell me she didnât put herself round. Vamps, thatâs what we used to call them.â She was knifing the extra dough from around the edge of a second pie.

Without confirming this verdict, Melrose said, âThen did she make a play for Billy?â

âIâd certainly think so. Billy was so attractive. Ten, fifteen years younger, but that makes no odds to the Olivias of this world.â

Melrose smiled. âWhat happened to his mother?â

âBoat accident. She drowned when she was not much over thirty. Well, what goes around comes around, is what I say.â

Melrose thought that a strange pronouncement. âWere you fond of Billy Maples?â

She didnât answer immediately and Melrose wondered what she had to think about.

âI expect I was, yes. We were never about much at the same time, except meals and tea. It was Mr. Brunner who saw to the running of things, mostly.â

âHe seems a nice enough chap.â

âExcept heâs German.â With one smooth sweep of the hand holding the knife, she carved the excess dough away from the pie.

Melrose laughed. âYouâre still fighting the war, are you, Mrs.

Jessup?â

When she didnât answer, he assumed this was a very sore spot and he should stop. And he didnât want her to be suspicious of Lord Ardryâs hanging about the kitchen picking up broken tarts. He sighed. âItâs been a long day. I think I shall enjoy letting the National Trust know how the Babcocksâ visit turned out.â

Something then occurred to him. âThe beastly child was licking a lollipop when they came in. I imagined she brought it into the kitchen, but I donât see it. Did you?â

She put down the pie and looked about. âNo, sir, I donât recall seeing it.â

âI know she didnât have it when they left.â He looked around the room, saw nothing resembling the hellish lolly. He wondered what Minnie had done with it.

âI suppose Iâll have to search for it. Iâm surprised itâs not in my hair.â

Mrs. Jessup laughed. âBeastly childâs too good a name for that one. That oneâll go through life drowning kittens.â

Â

He was searching the library bookshelves when the phone rang. It was Jury.

Melrose said, âIâm going to London tomorrow. I need a little peace and quiet. Living in a famous writerâs house has its drawbacks.â He related the afternoonâs festivities, wanting sympathy.

And getting none. âKids have always been your bÃªte noire. You want to argue with them, or reason with them. Neitherâs going to work.â

âArgue? I donât argue with a child.â He was at the dining room sideboard, opening drawers, looking inside.

âWell, then, you do seem to enjoy a confrontation with them.â

âYou would have confronted this one; youâd have slapped her in the nick. Mrs. Jessup was beside herself.â He told Jury the whole thing in vivid detail.

Jury laughed.

âHenry James rarely had children in his stories, and no wonder.â Carefully, Melrose thumbed through the James notebook on the dining room table; the lolly might be stuck in between its pages. He wouldnât put it past the wretched girl. âDid you know James wrote journal entries in this astonishingly good prose.â

âYes. I looked at his notebook. Why are you surprised?â

âWell, just because his novels were beautifully written doesnât mean everything was.â

Jury said, âI doubt the man was capable of slipshod writing.â

Melrose thought about this. âMaybe not. If youâre calling to ask whether Iâve found anything, the answer is no. Oh, but wait a bitââ

âWhat?â

âThe reason Billy took Lamb House. According to Mrs. Jessup itâs because he loved Jamesâs books. Always reading one, she said.â

âThatâs interesting. Iâm surprised. From what Iâve heard about Billy, he doesnât strike me as having had that much patience.â

âYou mean to read Henry James? That sounds like the kiss of death for any writer. If a book isnât immediately engrossing, itâs doomed, donât you think?â

âLike Proust? How many people are immediately engrossed there? Iâve only read the opening of *Swannâs Way*. Thatâs the only thing most people have read. They read up to the madeleine dipped in tea and then give up.â

âAnyway, according to Mrs. Jessup, thatâs why he wanted to live here. She hasnât much use for his family. The one she really hates is the grandmother.â

âRose Ames?â Jury laughed. âMrs. Ames criticized her cooking. Mrs. Jessup takes such criticism very seriously. Mrs. Amesâs daughter was Roderickâs first wife. She died in some boating accident.â

âLike Mrs. Jessupâs sister. Or sisters. Dora and somebody. An evacuation attempt to get children to Canada? Thwarted by a German sub.â

âSeavacs.â

âWho are they?â

âNot *they*. Evacuation by sea. Get it?â

There was a silence during which Melrose looked under the cushions of the parlor sofa.

âAre you still there?â

âIâm looking for the lollipop.â

âOh, of course. Did I call at a bad timeâ?â

âNoâThere it is! There it is!â Melrose dropped the receiver.

Stuck to the bottom of Jamesâs waistcoat inâor onâthe portrait was the ghastly girlâs lollipop. What he surmised she had done was to step up on the stool and, unable to reach the hand or the mouth of the subject, had planted the lollipop there at the bottom.

Oh, where were the ghosts of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint when one needed them?

Behind him, the telephone squawked.

FORTY-THREE

This time it was the housekeeper who came to the door. She nodded and smiled when Jury told her who he was. He followed her into the cozy sitting room where Sir Oswald Maples was putting aside a book, his two canes balanced against the arm of his easy chair.

The housekeeper left and Jury could see Maples was about to hoist himself up. Jury dropped into the chair he had used before and sighed. âHope you donât mind my falling down in a heap. Iâm knackered.â

âNot at all, Superintendent, but donât you want to take off your coat?â

Jury looked at his coat as if he were reacquainting himself with it. He stood and removed it.

âDrop it anywhere.â

âI like your housekeeper.â

âIâve had her for nearly ten years. Sheâs a nice woman. She doesnât fuss. I hate fuss.â

âI wanted to talk to you about Roderick and Billy. Did Roderick know who his father was? And did he remember that day at the station?â

Oswald hesitated, as if he was not going to answer, then said, âHe knows his father was an SS officer. Heâs never asked me anything, though. The SS, well, thatâs probably why he doesnât want to talk about it. Whether he knows what General RÃ¶hm did that day in the station, I donât know. He remembers the Kindertransport, of course, and his coming here to England.

âDid Billy know?â

âBilly?â There was an element of shock in the word. âNo. I canât imagine his father would have told him.â

âI think Billy might well have known.â

Oswald looked astonished. âWhy would you think that?â

âYou havenât been to your sonâs house in some time, have you?â

âYears. Only when Mary was alive. Thatâs a long time ago.â

âYou havenât seen the paintings Roderick acquired about a year ago?â

âNo. Paintings?â

âYour son says theyâre reproductions. One a Klimt, another a Soutine. Billy was suspicious; he took his friend Angela Riffley along to see what she thought. Sheâd been a curator, among other things, but whether or not she was qualified isnât really relevant. Anyway, she assured Billy the paintings were originals. To confirm this, she tracked their history, did a provenance check. Those two paintings were on a list of Nazi-confiscated art. You know the way they looted; you know the way they stripped museums and private collections.â

âYes, the Rothschild collection, that was one.â

âAngela Riffley found the history of ownership, how it left one hand and came into another. Itâs not the paintings, you see, that are important here; itâs who had them.â

âRÃ¶hm. He must have left them with someone for safekeeping if Roderick has them now. And you thinkââ

âThat Billy took this information and carried on with it. He found out who General RÃ¶hm was. I mean, if Roderick was heir to RÃ¶hmâs paintings, that would be reason to wonder just what his connection was. And he *did* find out.â

There was silence for a moment.

Then Jury said, âI think that confiscated art, the symbol of what RÃ¶hm and the *Schutz*âwhatâs the German?â

âYou mean the SS. *Schutzstaffel.* Sounds almost harmless, doesnât it? Like some Bavarian pastry.â

âThe thing is, it might explain some of Billyâs actions with reference to art, the generous outpouring of money to the gallery he liked and to certain artists. Trying to make up for the atrocity of the past, trying in some small way to wipe out what his grandfather might have done. Billy had a conscience, a real conscience; he felt guilty, even though heâd done nothing himself.â

âYes. I can see that. If, of course, your theory is right. Itâs rather clever, butââ

Jury shook his head. âItâs not a theory. I know itâs right.â

âHow?â

âMy source was impeccable. A priest.â

Oswald blinked as if dazzled by light. âMy word.â He shook his head. âBut youâre right, it would explain his behavior.â

Jury got up. âIâve got to goâno, donât get up. Thereâs one question, though, that I couldnât find an answer to, I mean until now. In all of this tracking down of the pastâhis father, the paintings, his grandfatherâwhy didnât he ask you? If anyone had answers, it would be you.â

âYes. I wonder that myself. Either he thought I didnât know anything or he didnât trust me.â

Jury shook his head. âIâd say no to both of those possibilities. I finally worked it out.â

Despite Juryâs telling him not to get up, Sir Oswald did. âThen what?â

âHe was protecting you.â Jury smiled. âHe didnât want you to share in his suspicions and later in his knowledge. He assumed you didnât know. And you were protecting him for the same reason. I donât know what that does for you, but it does a hell of a lot for me. Good-bye, Sir Oswald.â

Jury gave him a small salute and walked out.

FORTY-FOUR

Trevor, wine expert, was holding out a bottle for Harry Johnsonâs inspection.

Jury sat down on the bar chair beside Harry and said, âStick it to him, Trevor. Find one that costs at least a hundred quid.â

âI did.â Trevor applied the corkscrew.

âHello, Mungo,â said Jury. The dog slid out from under Harryâs chair. Jury reached down and scratched his head.

It was a warm afternoon in the Old Wine Shades, insulated, really. Trevor took another glass from the shelf behind him and poured wine into both.

âThe utter relentlessness of Londonâs finest astonishes me,â said Harry. His smile was touched by a sort of genial defiance. âThatâs fine with me, only Iâd think youâd have more interesting cases to be going on with.â He sipped his wine and made an appreciative sound.

âGolly, Harry, what could be more interesting than a highly cultivated psychopath with a lot of money?â

âGolly, Richard, let me know when you find one. But Iâd think even that would wear thin after a while.â

âDonât you believe it. Weâre now seeing if the kids you kidnapped can identify your voice.â

âReally? Where are they, then?â Harry made a show of looking behind the bar, around the room, and under the bar chairs.

Mungo woofed again.

âNope. No one here but Mungo.â

âItâs a tape, Harry.â

Harry raised his eyebrows. âWhere did you manage to get me on tape?â

Jury wished the man would show some honest surprise. âLast time I was in here.â A lie.

âNo! Youâre saying you came in here *wired*?â Harry laughed. âIâve always wanted to say that word.â

âThatâs right.â

Harry feigned indignation. âYouâre interfering with my civil liberties. Or is that only in the U.S.? Surely thatâs illegal.â

âAfraid not, Harry.â

âAnd what do these children say?â

âI donât know yet.â

Harry lit a small cigar and, remembering Jury didnât smoke, waved the smoke away. That just killed Jury. The man was a murderer, a kidnapper, a fraud, a nutcase, but he waved the smoke away. âWell, they wonât be able to do it.â

âAnd why is that, Harry?â *Go on, say it, Because I didnât talk to them. Say it!*

âBecause I wasnât there.â

Hell. âWhere?â

âWhere? I assume there must have been a time and place where this scene unfolded, or are you back in the ten dimensions again?â Harry beckoned to Trevor. âThis is great wine.â Then to Jury: âYou want to make a mystery out of everything. I expect you canât help it, though. What are you working on these days?â

Trevor refilled both glasses and went down the bar to the other end.

âThatâs police business.â

âYou know, itâs all so cops and robbers with you, Superintendent. Would I bother asking if it *werenât* police business?â

âJust your garden-variety murder. Not nearly as interesting as yours.â

Harry made a *tsk*ing sound through his teeth. âI keep telling you I didnât murder anyone.â

âAnd I keep not believing you. DI Dryer doesnât believe you either. Donât think heâs stopped working the case.â

âAh, yes. He struck me as extremely intelligent, probably more than you. But not nearly so *soignÃ©*.â

âThanks.â

âSo what is this one? Stabbing? Shooting? Garroting?â

Jury didnât answer; instead he asked, âHave you ever been in a club called Dust?â

âYou mean that place in Clerkenwell? Itâs one of those trendy clubs with crazy live music where you can really get down. Barmen in

torn T-shirts and so forth.â

âA hotel across Clerkenwell Roadââ

âThe Zetter. The big Z. Iâve eaten in their restaurant. Itâs quite fabulous.â He checked his watch. âCare to go?â

âNo, thanks. Iâve got a mountain of paperwork Iâd much rather do. Youâre trying to pick up where we left off?â

Harry smiled. âHardly. Where we left off was my being a psychopathic killer. Which Iâm not. No, I was just thinking of a good spot for dinner.â

Mungo slipped out from under the bar chair and looked up at Jury. Had he not known that dogs really couldnât roll their eyes, heâd have sworn Mungo just did. The dog slid back under the chair.

âThatâs where the murder took place, the Zetter.â

âShooting?â

âRight.â Jury, in spite of himself, told him the story. It was as if he was compelled to. Harry was one of those people who enticed others into telling stories, though no one was as good a storyteller as Harry himself. Harry was *about* stories.

Harry watched the long mirror behind the bar and blew smoke rings throughout Juryâs tale. Harry was also about smoke and mirrors.

Then he asked, âThe grandfather, Maples, was in codes and ciphers, you said?â

âBletchley Park.â

âHow can you be sure heâs telling the truth?â

Jury laughed. âBecause not everyoneâs like you, Harry.â

âSeriously,â as if Jury couldnât have been, not with that response, âhow can you be sure this is a crime *en famille,* so to speak? Perhaps thereâs another agenda. It sounds as if there is.â

âHarry, if thereâs anyone who can turn a sowâs ear into a silk purse, itâs you.â

âIâm merely saying there might be broader ramifications.â

âSuch as?â He signed to Trevor.

Trevor came down the bar, picking up Harryâs bottle on the way.

âThe code and cipher branch is a function of MI, isnât it? There could be something going onââ

âThereâs always something going on, Harry.â Jury watched Trevor pour the wine, the last of it to Harry. âAnd how in hell do you know about GC and CS?â

Harry didnât bother answering that. He said, âYou should talk to

him again, keeping that in mind.â

Jury was getting irrationally angry. âWith *what* in mind?â

This earned him a condescending look and a head shake. âAre you having trouble following? Bad for a copper.â Harry lit another cigar. They were small and lasted not much longer than cigarettes. âKeeping in mind that you might have made up your mind too soon; that youâre focusing on the wrong thing. There may be another agenda.â

Jury set down his glass and stared at Harry. âThatâs more up *your* street, Harry. As itâs exactly what you did. You got me focused on the wrong thing.â

Harry smiled. âI donât know what you mean.â

âBollocks. You know exactly what I mean. Come on, itâs just us.â

âItâs never *just* us.â

âIf you mean the wireââ Jury opened his jacket wide. âI told you Iâm not fitted out with anything.â

âI donât trust you, sport. Iâd sooner trust Mungo.â

âHell, so would I.â

Mungo eased himself out from under the chair and sat looking at Jury. Looking at Harry. Looking from one to the other.

âLetâs get out of here and take a walk. Trev?â Harry held up a ten-pound note like a little flag. Trevor nodded. Harry dropped it on the bar.

Jury checked his watch. It would be an hour until he had to meet Phyllis at Ruiyi.

âThen come on.â Harry was up and shrugging into his coat, the black cashmere. The ten pounds was clearly for Trevorâs tip. The bottle would be added to his account. Jury imagined he must have one. He must spend thousands in this place, considering the price of the wine Trevor usually chose. The pub was apparently Harryâs regular, even though it was a distance from his home in Belgravia.

Jury pulled his coat on, definitely not cashmere, just his old Burberry with a lining against the cold. It was still chilly for April.

Mungo followed them out.

They walked along Cannon Street, which seemed harshly modern and modish after the smoky ambience of the Old Wine Shades and the old-world character of Martinâs Lane.

âSo what are we doing, walking around out here?â

âWalking around out here.â

âHow illuminating. *Why* are we?â

âWalking is a good way to talk.â

âI think sitting on a bar chair is a better way.â

Harry shook his head, seemingly at Juryâs own thickheadedness. âThat depends on whoâs in the bar chair next to you.â

âWhat? There was no one next to me.â

âThere was next to me.â

âWho?â

âOh, for Godâs sakes, I have no idea. Thatâs the point.â

Jury stopped. So did Harry then. So did Mungo.

âHarry, youâre the most paranoid person Iâve ever known.â

Harry didnât bother denying the charge. He said, âYou wondered how it was I was familiar with codes and ciphersâGC and CS. Itâs because my father worked there.â

They had come by now to St. Paulâs churchyard and Jury stopped cold. â*What?* Your father was at Bletchley? Donât make me laugh!â

âWhy is that so impossible? He was a friend of Alan Turingââ

Jury picked up the pace and was walking again. Harry and Mungo followed. âHarry, is there *anything* you donât connect up with? Is my life in your com pany to be spent in a vast sea of coincidence? When it isnât a pack of lies.â

âDonât you get bored,â said Harry, âwith people always telling you the truth?â

âIâm CID. *Nobody* tells me the truth.â They were walking up Ludgate Hill. âLeast of all you.â

This earned a belabored sigh. âYouâre such a cynic. Thatâs not good in a detective. Itâs true, though, my father was at Bletchley Park. You know what the Poles said about the Enigma?â

âI have no idea.â

âTo defeat the Enigma code, you need a counter-Enigma.â

âYour point being?â

âIâd say you need me.â

Again, Jury stopped dead. Near Ludgate Circus, he did a 180-degree turn, as if inviting someone, anyone, some *thing* to explain such double-dyed duplicity as was vested in that suggestion.

âOh, come on,â said Harry. âYou know Iâm exceedingly smart.â

âYes, Harry, believe me I know youâre smart. Now if you were only *sane* Iâd say you have a bright future.â They were the same height, more than six feet, and Jury got right up in Harryâs face. âYou know that I know that you know that whole story was a pack of lies. It was all diabolically clever.â

Harry yawned. âYou have a rich fantasy life, Richard, and youâre

making the same mistake you made before.â

Jury started walking again. How in hell had they gotten to Farringdon Road? âWhat mistake?â

âYouâve forgotten your GÃ¶del.â

âI never *remembered* GÃ¶del. I couldnât understand him.â

âOf course you did. Youâre one of the quickest studies Iâve ever known. GÃ¶delâs incompleteness theorem: you canât formally prove the consistency of a system of arithmetic within the system.â

âWhat in hell are you talking about? This isnât arithmetic.â

Another deep sigh from Harry. âYes, it is. Look: youâve got the victim, the villain, for once not me, at least not yet, the suspects, the innocent, you, me, your sergeant, and so forth, you know, people on the fringe, such as Trevor back thereâ*and* whichever suspects prove to be innocent.â Harry smiled. âWhich is the problem, isnât it? Remember SchrÃ¶dingerâs cat.â

That set Mungo to pacing back and forth along the pavement as if he were trying to work something out.

Jury looked up at a tilting moon. Was this how the world would end for him? Him listening to Harry Johnson? Yet knowing he was allowing himself to be sucked in, he couldnât resist asking, âHow does SchrÃ¶dingerâs cat come into it?â

âObviously: the catâs dead, the catâs alive. Simultaneously. Your man is guilty, your man is innocent. Simultaneously. And youâthe detectiveâwander in on this conundrumââ

âDo me a favor and shut up, Harry.â

ââand you change things. The players are not what they were before.â

âAll youâre saying is Iâm not objective.â

Harry mashed his hand against his forehead. âNo, no, no, no! Thatâs *not* what Iâm saying. You impose yourself upon the scene. Say, the crime scene. And you change it. It isnât what it was before. The incompleteness theorem.â

âHarry, this is the most arrant nonsense Iâve heard. GÃ¶del would kick you all the way to Clerkââ Jury stood looking around. âHow in hell did we get to *Clerkenwell Road*?â

Harry pointed. âThereâs the big Z. Dinner?â

Jurry stepped out into the Clerkenwell Road. âAnd hereâs a cab. Good night.â

FORTY-FIVE

Late again.

Ruiyi was crowded, as usual. He could see Phyllis sitting at a table in the back of the room, not looking at all as if she were waiting for someone. She was reading a book and eating. Jury had wedged himself through the door, where a number of people in the closely packed and highly concentrated line gave him killing looks.

âPhyllis, Iâm so sorry. How long have you been here?â

âHours!â She looked at her watch. âActually, twenty minutes.â She laughed and pointed her fork at her plate. âDelicious. I was starved, so I ordered. I hope you donât mind.â

He did and wondered why in the hell he had the *right* to mind. Absurdly, he felt as if he himself were an afterthought. Heâd rather sheâd been cooling her heels and tapping her fingers on the tabletop. How ridiculous.

âOf course not,â he said as he draped his coat over the back of his chair.

âThen why do you look so gloomy?â

âI do? Well, I donât feel gloomy.â His smile did not light up his eyes. Nor hers. He gave a cursory look at the menu, knowing heâd order the Peking duck. He was almost as bad as Wiggins, who studied the Ruiyi menu every time they came and then always ordered the crispy fish.

âAt least youâre smiling now.â

âOh. I was just thinking of Wiggins. This is his favorite restaurant.â

âBy the look of it, Sergeant Wiggins is not alone.â She inclined her head toward the line. âItâs always like that, isnât it? Youâd think that after a couple of times, theyâd wise up.â

âAnd make reservations? Danny doesnât take them. Or get here

earlier? Not unless they came at eight a.m. Itâs like a U2 concert.â

âNo. I was thinking more along the lines of joining the Metropolitan Police.â She rooted her ID out of a carryall. âI elbowed my way straight to a table. Itâs really thrilling to be able to do that.â

The little waitress, as big as a thimble, bowed slightly to Jury and his menu. âSuh?â

Either sir? Or so? Jury smiled at her and ordered the Peking duck and another pot of tea.

âHere,â said Phyllis. âHave some of mine.â There was a second little stoneware cup; Phyllis had asked for two. Now she poured out tea for Jury, and now he wasnât an afterthought.

He watched her do this and felt the tea already warming his insides, and hers, too. âThank you.â

Phyllis was one of those attentive persons who seemed to know you needed something before you were aware of it, from a tissue for an incipient sneeze to the path of a bullet. To a cup for your tea. He smiled. It was a better smile.

âWhatâs going on with Billy Maples?â

âI talked to Oswald Maples today. I think I understand at least Billyâs contributions to art and artists.â He told her about the paintings.

âWho is this Riffley woman? There seem to be so many women tied up in this case.â Her eyebrows did a little dance.

And Jury noted that she didnât mention one particular woman. âMelrose Plant calls her the talented Mrs. Ripley.â

Phyllis burst out in laughter.

âNone of this helps much with relation to Billyâs killer, though.â He looked at Phyllisâs fortune cookie sitting on a tiny plate and decided not to break it. âIâm almost certain this killing was for revenge.â

âRevenge? What could he have done?â

âNot Billy. Billy was the surrogate. Revenge against Sir Oswald Maples is a strong possibility.â

âWhy?â

âThatâs where Iâm not sure. Itâs just that this crime seems to stretch so far back. The motive isnât money, thatâs pretty clear.â

âHow about love? How about a *crime passionnel*?â

Jury would rather not go into that. He cleared his throat, shook his head. âI donât see it that way.â

âWhat about Kurt Brunner?â

âHe wasnât involved in the Kindertransport; I mean other than being in the station on that day. He was too little. No, he met Billy when he was in Berlin. Says they hit it off so well that Billy offered him this job. Kurt said he hated teaching, and was going to retire any way. I donât know. I donât know how much of what he told me I believe.â

âBut if youâre going to accept one historyâthat is, what Sir Oswald told you about Roderickâs historyâwouldnât you have to accept Brunnerâs?â

âWhy?â

âBecause itâs more logical; they reinforce each other.â

The little waitress was at his elbow, having crept up without his noticing. She placed his duck before him. He thanked her. âYouâre saying that because Roderick was the SS generalâs son and Kurt was the Brunnersâ son, they must be connected by the shooting in the train station. I donât think one follows from the other. Thereâs a logical flaw, isnât there? Itâs like saying âall women are beautiful; Phyllis is beautiful; therefore Phyllis is a woman.ââ

âSounds perfectly logical to me.â

He laughed.

âStill, itâs quite a coincidence.â

âYes, it would be.â

âSo these paintings,â said Phyllis, âwere part of the Nazi plunder and General RÃ¶hm got them and stashed them someplace and Roderick only recently got possession of them again.â

âIâm going to tell Lu to get a warrant to inspect them.â

âLu?â

âAguilar. Islington police? You met her.â

âOh. Yes. The beautiful woman. I mean, if your syllogism holds up, she *would* be a woman.â

Jury felt her gaze and concentrated on inspecting the old familiar duck.

âWhat do you want most, Richard?â

Quickly, he looked up. Was this some pointed time-to-choose remark? âWhat do you mean?â

âJustâwhat most do you want in life?â

He smiled a little and reached over and took her fortune cookie. He broke it open. âSolace.â

She frowned. âIt doesnât say that.â

âNo. Remember that great film with Bette Davis, *All About Eve*?

Thereâs a scene after the scheming Eve steals Margoâs role through trickery and then gets this magnificent review. Margo of course is effing and blinding all over the place. And crying. Her director rushes into her house, puts his arms around her, and says, âI ran all the way.ää Jury smiled. âThatâs what I want.â

She sat there just looking at him and saying nothing.

He said, âLife is just too bloody hard. You lose too many things. âI ran all the way.ää Jury smiled bleakly. âSolace.â

FORTY-SIX

âAh! Superintendent Jury,â said Colonel Joss Neame, looking up from his *Telegraph* and repositioning his whiskey glass. He was always made buoyant by the presence of Jury. âCome for your friend, have you?â

âThatâs right.â Jury looked around. âWhereâs Major Champs?â They were ordinarily in tandem, like an old vaudeville act. Jury smiled, contemplating this.

âSaid he felt a bit queasy.â Colonel Neame shielded his mouth with his hand. âDonât have the fish pie for luncheon if youâre planning on eating here.â

âWhat else is on offer?â asked Jury. His eyes were heavy and the soft leather chair in which he sank nestled around him, held him in its dark bloodred embrace. He tried not to think of Lu, and thought of Lu.

âThe portobello mushroom is quite good.â

âBut not the fish, right?â

âNo, and itâs a stargazey pie, too, always been one of my favorites.â

âWhatâs that?â

âOh, itâs a cleverly made pie: several of the little fishesâ heads are fixed to poke up through the top crust, looking at the stars, I assume. Itâs quite the thing in Cornwall.â

âMost things are. Listen: I had another meeting with your friend, Sir Oswald Maples, just a few days ago. You remember, you told me about him.â

âMaples, yes, brilliant man, brilliant. Got an OBE, didnât he?â

âApparently.â

âWhat are youâwait, wait just a tick.â Colonel Neame rescued his paper from in front of the fireplace. âI was just readingâ¦here, on the

inside. A Billy Maples was shot in a hotel in Clerkenwell. You donât mean to tell meââ

âYes. Billy Maples was his grandson.â

âDear God.â The colonel looked from the item in the paper up to Juryâs face as if trying to reconcile the two pieces of information. âDear God,â he said again. Then, shunning sympathy for curiosity, he asked, âBut is this a case youâre working on, Superintendent?â

âYes. Did you know any of Sir Oswaldâs family?â

Colonel Neame shook his head. âNo. You pretty much parked your private life at the door. Private lives and Station X didnât mix.â

âStation X?â

âBletchley Park. Thatâs what we called it.â

âTell me, since it must have been a very stressful, very competitive, and highly charged environment, could heâSir Oswaldâhave made any enemies there?â

âCould he have? I expect so.â Colonel Neame frowned and hunched over in his chair.

âWhat did you know about Oswald Maples?â

Joss Neame frowned. âWell, he was regarded as quite brilliant.â

âYou said you left your personal lives at the door. Was that true of all of you?â

Neameâs laugh was short, abrupt. âWe didnât have them, if thatâs what youâre wondering. Short rations in that department.â

âMost of you would have had families. Did you have leave to visit your wives and children?â

âI myself hadnât married yet. Good thing, too, as there was no shortage of good-looking women there. As to wives and so forth visiting, not in a blue moon.â He cocked his head and gave Jury a slightly disbelieving look. âAre you suspecting Maples was a skirt chaser or something?â

Jury laughed at the antiquated term. âThatâs the furthest thing from my mind. No, Iâm only wondering how much freedom there was to give to personal affairs.â

âVery little. And for Maples even less. He was too valuable. I donât mean the man was under guard, only that he was indispensable.â

Jury thought for a moment. âDo you recall the evacuation of German children on what was called the Kindertransport? These children were transported, most of them to Britain, to keep them safe.â

âHmm. When was this?â

â1939. There were several trips made.â

Colonel Neame shook his head. âSounds familiar, butâ¦Memoryâs not what it used to be. But whatâs that got to do with BP?â

âNothing, directly. The children were taken in over here. All that was required was a fifty-pound note to defray expenses. I wondered how Bletchley Park would welcome its people taking these children in?â

âA German child? Hmm. I rather doubt it, but anythingâs possible, isnât it. Yet why in heavenâs name would Maples *want* to saddle himself with a child.â

âI think it was his wife who wanted this. And most of the country was extremely sympathetic to these kids.â

âRight. Understood. But most of the country wasnât engaged in cracking the Enigma code.â

âHere you are,â said Melrose Plant, coming up behind Juryâs chair. âI see youâre checking whatâs on the menu.â He sat down and said to Colonel Neame, âHeâs been cheating all along, finding out from you whatâs on the menu and then betting on the information you give him. He always wins, and no wonder.â

Colonel Neame laughed. âI like to bet occasionally myself. Roulette, thatâs the ticket. You know weâve a largish room back thereââhe dipped his headââthatâs going to waste; no one uses it anymore. Iâve been trying to work up interest in a casinolike venue. We could have a few tablesâblackjack, poker, and definitely roulette. Hire a croupier. And none of those hellish machinesââhere he raised his arm and pulled his hand down on the arm of an imaginary slot machineââtheyâre too noisy and cheap. Iâm telling you, thereâs a lot of interest around here in a casino.â

âThereâs a lot of interest in it over in Vice, too.â

âCome on, come on,â said Melrose. âLetâs go to our portobello mushrooms.â

âMushroom.â

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They let the portobello mushrooms alone and ordered the Boringâs club sandwich.

Young Higgins appeared with their wine, poured a smidgen into their glasses, and stood there.

Melrose took a sip. âItâs woody, isnât it, Higgins?â He set the glass

down.

Higgins took a step back. Then he held the glass to his nose and whisked the bottle away.

Jury held on to the small drink in his glass. âWoody? What in hellâs that?â

âI just made it up. You can say anything about wine and it gets results.â Melrose set his glass down. âQuite good, actually. What were you talking to Colonel Neame about?â

âThe Hitler Youth.â

âHow unpleasant.â

âI was thinking about Kurt Brunner. He seems to have been a true friend. The way he talked about Billy. I mean, the way he remembered conversations from eight years ago. And in detail. Hell, Iâd be hard put to remember details of a conversation I had with you eight minutes ago.â

âThank you.â

âAccording to Malcolm, Billy especially liked the Imperial War Museum. You know, in Lambeth. Thereâs a huge display of World War Two memorabilia and weaponry.â

âAnd Billy was interested in this because?â

âBecause of his grandfather, I imagine. Itâs so hard to connect the dots in this case that I indulge myself in intuitive leaps. Those paintings: the Klimt and the Soutine. Angela Riffleyâs tracking down the history of those paintings.â

âAnd what about Mrs. Ripley? She was in love with Billy Maples. The motive could have been love lost.â

âYes. Another motive might be revenge.â

Melrose was taken aback. âFor what? Against whom?â

âPossibly Oswald Maples. The murder of his grandson has been a terrible blow. He really loved Billy Maples.â

âSo Billy could have been murdered by defaultâwell, thatâs a rather cold interpretation. You mean the worst punishment to mete out to Sir Oswald is not his *own* death, but his grandsonâs. The trouble is none of these people has been eliminated as suspects. They donât have alibis.â

âOh, I think Sir Oswald has one. Not because he can prove where he was at the time of the murder, but because heâs plagued with arthritis; he needs two canes to make it to the door sometimes. No, Iâd say heâs straight out of it.â

âWhat about the talented Mrs. Ripley?â

Jury laughed. âWhat about her?â

âI think I might just go and see her, present her with this conundrum, and see what she says. Sheâs done everything; she knows everything; sheâs quite inventive.â

âHer inventiveness stops at her own doorsill.â

âI could go tomorrow morning.â

âI canât deputize you.â

âWhoâs asking you to? Iâll just be myself.â

Jury laughed briefly. âSee how far that gets you.â

âThanks. But if Billy threw her over, sheâd certainly have motive.â

âPerhaps. Though I simply canât imagine Angela Riffleyâs being that passionate about anyone. It would take a lot of passion to walk in and shoot the man you love.â

Melrose sighed. âTrue. And what do we know about passion?â

âWhat do we know, right.â Jury smiled and drank his wine.

FORTY-SEVEN

When he got back to Islington, she was sitting on the steps, twirling her keys around her finger.

Jury had called the station, but she wasnât there. He was about to ring her mobile when he saw her sitting there.

He got out of the car, locked it, walked over. âI was going to the station. This will save time.â

âI doubt it.â She got to her feet and brushed off her skirt.

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On their way up to Juryâs door, she said, âAn extremely pretty girlâno, more than prettyâpassed me on the steps. Does she live here?â

Jury put his key in the door. âUpstairs. Top floor.â

He opened the door and she went in and whatever else she had to say about Juryâs pretty girl and whatever he had to tell her got lost in a kiss. Their lips touched, not just touched, not just kissed, but clung, as if, in the act of drowning, they were buoying each other up. Her arms locked around his neck. He marveled at the way clothes could fall away, as if they were blown off by the wind coming through the window.

Then they were on the bed, and whatever had seemed so urgent was forgotten.

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âWhy are you so solemn?â he said and brushed the dark strands of hair from her face.

âAm I?â

âYou usually are, even in the midst of thisââ

She smiled. âThis what?â

He propped his head on his arm and looked down at her. âYou never seem to be happy.â

âIs this the sort of thing that makes a person happy?â She rolled over on top of him. âItâs so hopeless to control. Like a fire that will burn us up. I hate to think of that.â

Jury was angry. He pushed her off, got up. âOkay, if this isnât making us happy, then why in the hell do it? If itâs nothing but some malignant force?â Heâd yanked on his shorts, was looking for his pantsâ*how had they landed in the bathroom?* âThe hell with it. Itâs dangerous. Weâd be booted off the force in an eyeblink; itâs interfering with what weâre supposed to be doingââ

He stopped. She looked stricken. He sat on the bed, she inched over and lay her head on his back, snaked her arms around him, said she was sorry, sorry, she had thought he felt the same way.

Which he did; thatâs what made him angry.

He put his hand on hers, knotted around his waist. âNo, Iâm the one who should be sorry. Listen: get dressed. Iâve something to tell you.â

He went into the kitchen, pulled two beers from the fridge, and opened them. When he took them into the living room she was just stepping into her skirt. He told her about the paintings and said, âI donât think it necessarily gets us any closer to our killer. What do you think?â Jury stuffed his shirt into his pants, took a pull on the beer. She didnât answer; she seemed to be concentrating hard. âLu?â

âSheâs a sexy-looking woman, isnât she?â

Jury frowned so he wouldnât smile. âWho?â

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Alone again, Jury assumed the tapping at his door was Mrs. Wasserman, come again to make another worried report about an intruder.

He pasted a smile on his face and opened the door.

âI understand,â said Carole-anne, poking her head in and giving the room a quick canvas, âthereâs been a lot of noise coming from here and Mrs. Wasserman is scared to death.â

The head was followed by the rest of herself, a self no one could quarrel with, clad as it was in lemon and what looked like meringue frothing at her neckline. Her hot ginger hair brightened in the lamplight beside her when she sat downâflounced down, more likeâon his sofa, her usual seat for discussing Juryâs life as it revolved around

his Islington digs. Meaning around her or, throwing the net wider (but not much), around Mrs. Wasserman, Stan Keeler, Stone. His life was all of their businesses, especially Carole-anneâs.

âWhat noise? Oh, you mean that table falling over?â He pointed out the guilty party beneath the window on which sat magazines, papers, and an old green shaded pharmacy lamp.

âThen it mustâve kept on falling as the noise was repeated many times.â She regarded her nails as if she were about to get out the polish and give herself a manicure. She liked to do that sort of thing around Jury.

Jury had by now sat down across from her and crossed one leg over the other, cradling a knee. âCarole-anne, your being so great at interrogation, maybe you could solve my recent case for me?â

Right now she had dropped off her sandals and was looking at her toes. Pedicure? âIâd be happy to, after I find out what was making all that noise.â She leaned forward, planted an elbow on her knee, clamped her chin in her hand, and regarded him.

Jury threw up his arms. âAll right, all right, I had a small party and we all got drunk as lords.â

âYou having a party?â She hooted. âTell me another! Anyway, if it *was* a party, Iâd have been invited.â Her look at him was uncertain.

His at her was annoyed. In another moment heâd bloody well tell her. No, he wouldnât. He didnât think he could bear Carole-anneâs looking like sheâd taken a hit by a lorry.

He frowned. âLook, you didnât hear anything yourself. Youâre getting all of this from Mrs. Wasserman and she always exaggerates, you know she does. Sheâs paranoid.â Jury tied a shoelace, having wedged his foot into the shoe.

âWhatâs paranoid got to do with it? If a piece of my ceiling fell on me, would you say I was being paranoid for saying so?â

âThat question is completely illogical.â

âWell, donât tell her that I told you she told me because you told her you didnât want her to.â

Jury sat back, one foot over his knee, plucking at his shoelace. âIn the time it would take me to work out what you just said, I could have my case locked and loaded.â

âWhat?â

âLetâs see: âdonât tell her I told you she told me,â etceteraââ

âWell donât. Sheâs upset enough without you complaining.â

âComplaining how? Iâm not complaining.â

âIn case you would complain about her complaining.â

Jury rose and widened his arms. âAm I caught in a swinging door with you?â

She got off and did a bored-to-tears stretch. âDonât you wish.â

FORTY-EIGHT

There was a different desk clerk this time being treated to a look at Juryâs and Wigginsâs warrant cards.

She frowned. âThereâs already another officer up there.â As if one detective at a time was the Zetterâs limit.

Jury smiled. âWeâre from different worlds.â

They headed for the elevator.

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âAnother officerâ turned out to be DI Aguilar, whom heâd just seen or not seen leaving his flat.

Jury wasnât surprised. She was the sort of detective who believed that if you look often enough and long enough, something will give itself up. And she also believed that the more people looking often and long enough would double the chances of seeing it.

She was alone.

Jury wasnât.

Thank God.

The crime scene tape was still in place, so they had to dodge beneath it. When they walked through the door, Lu Aguilar walked in from the patio. âWhat I donât understand,â she began, as if theyâd been having a conversation, âis the second tray, the coffee.â She looked down at the long ledge where the two trays had been sitting. âWhy didnât this person turn up?â

Wiggins, as if he, too, had been a part of the ongoing conversation, said, âHe didnât come. I mean, whoever it was didnât show. Happens all the time.â He shrugged and rolled his latest miracle pill or sliver of digestive gum around in his mouth.

DI Aguilar looked at him. âBilly Maples shot himself?â

Jury wished sheâd keep the vinegar out of her tone.

But Wiggins was unflappable. âSomeone else. Someone Maples didnât have an appointment with.â He chewed.

DI Aguilar actually looked abashed.

âWeâre talking about a third person?â She thought about this. âRight now Iâm assuming he was interrupted when he was eating, that he was shot and placed on the patio or perhaps they even went out there together.â

She walked slowly round the room as she had that night, fingers passing over surfaces like water.

âOccamâs razor.â Jury smiled. âThatâs what your sergeant would say. The simplest explanation is probably the right one.â

She nodded. âMaybe. Iâm going back to the station.â

âItâs late, Lu. Go to bed.â

She smiled. âI donât have time.â

Very funny.

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Theyâd parked the car in Farringdon Road, a couple of blocks away. They crossed over Clerkenwell Road, managing to stay clear of the four buses all arriving at the same time and belching to a stop. London Transport had conveniently deployed the buses so as to make everyone wait a goodish half hour, unless you were one of the lucky ones whoâd just joined the queue. No, he recalled that Wiggins had a theory about this pileup of buses all together, but Jury didnât want to know what it was.

In Cowcross Street, he saw a McDonaldâs. âYou peckish, Wiggins? I am.â

Jury was aware that stopping in a McDonaldâs would prompt Wiggins to continue his harangue about the American scourge now spreading its tentacles along the A roads to squeeze out the Happy Eater chain. He was not disappointed: as they took their place in one of the four lines, Wiggins started in on Burger King.

âYes, Wiggins, you apprised me of that dastardly plan on the way to Rye. But chin up, Burger King will serve up a British menu. Beans on toast and grilled tomato.â

They were next at the counter and Jury ordered a Big Mac, a small order of fries, and coffee. Wiggins studied the big menu signs behind the counter as if there might be a surprise in store. The girl at her station looked unbelievably bored.

âIâll haveâ¦â

The girl brought her fingers to hover over the computer list of dishes and Jury felt like warning her: *No, no, donât ready yourself yet, heâs a way from the actual decision.*

Silently, Wiggins scoured the menu again while the couple behind them, both in black leather and heavily studded, shifted from one foot to the other, waiting, one would have thought, with surprising patience, until Jury decided they were completely stoned, so not there.

ââ¦Big Mac and a large chipped potatoesââ

(Refusing to give in to the American term âfries.â)

ââ¦and a Diet Coke.â

Jury shook his head and went in search of a table. Wiggins, he knew, would stop at the counter with its array of condiments and sugar and milk.

Wiggins slid into the seat, and Jury said, âYou got the same thing I did. But I only made one pass at the menu.â He reached over to Wigginsâs tray and picked up a couple of slippery little packets of mustard and ketchup.

Wiggins had unzipped two ketchup packets and was spurting them on his potatoes. âI never could stand the idea of tomato sauce on chips until I started eating these.â

Jury had just bitten into his Big Mac when Wiggins said this. He nearly choked and had to grab Wigginsâs Diet Coke to get the bite of his sandwich down.

Wiggins had stopped dead in ministering to his hamburger. âSir, are you all right?â

âHe didnât eat it.â Jury stared at Wiggins.

âPardon? Who?â

âBilly Maples didnât eat that burger or those potatoes. The ketchupâtomato sauce as you call itâwas on both. Billy would never have put that on the food. He hated tomatoes in any form, according to Mrs. Jessup. Somebody else was messing with that food.â

Wiggins frowned. âBut why?â

âTo make it *look* as if Billy had been eating.â

Wigginsâs frown deepened. âBut why *that*? Is it a time thing? Something to do with an alibi?â

Jury fell back against the back of the booth. âTo make it appear that someone had come and interrupted him.â

âBut the order for coffeeâwe know that was for two people, we know that he expected someone.â

âThatâs much weaker. It was never served.â Jury leaned his forehead into the palm of his hand, as if he might, in this way, force some memory.

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âDonât try private detective work when you retire,â said Harry Johnson.

âYou think Iâm that dumb, do you?â

âYes. Youâre, letâs say, âdetective dumbâ whereas, the rest of you is quite bright.â

Jury held up two fingers, appealing to Trevor down the bar, either for a quick saving or another glass of wine, this eveningâs being a PremiÃ¨re CÃ´tes de Bordeaux, no, a St.-Emilion Figeacâno, a MÃ©docâbut which one? There were so many.

âLetâs say,â Harry embellished upon an earlier point, *âyou have a photo and negative. Two separate things and yet the same. You, my friendly detective, canât get them to match up. Youâre always a tiny fraction off, which is as good as a mile. Though itâs the same picture, same subject, same everythingââ*

âWait, wait, wait a minute. I have a feeling SchrÃ¶dingerâs cat is coming into this.â

âNo, for Godâs sakes. The catâs dead, the catâs aliveâthose are polar oppositesâthose two states are different. Your two states are the same. Youâve got the victim, the dinner, the waiter, the coffee, and the second waiter. But youâve also got this other playerârather like a chess piece; which one is it? Rook? Knight, which can move freely about the board? Then thereâs the supper not eaten by the victim. Someone else ate it. Thatâs certain. The someone else is pretty obviously, the killerâ¦â

The voices grew fainter and fainter, something like the dazzling bright spot on the telly fading when you turn it off.

Jury switched it on again: *âAnd you know who it is.â*

Harry Johnson looked at him. *âOnly an idiot wouldnât at this point.â*

âFuck off, Harry.â

Jury switched his brain off, rolled over in bed, and tried to sleep.

FORTY-NINE

Iâll just be myself. Well, not exactly myself, thought Melrose as he pushed the button on the white pillar of the house in Mayfair. He didnât have to wait long.

Angela Riffley answered the door wearing spangled green and sunny yellow and, upon seeing Melrose, looked back quickly over her shoulder as if someone were following her.

Danger lurking? Melrose wanted to laugh. âMrs. Riffley? Angela Riffley?â

Her eyebrows went up a fraction in surprise that anyone she hadnât given it to would know her name.

âItâs about a friend of yours, Billy Maples.â

She went from surprise to suspicion, a deep sensuality underlying all reactions. The artist in Jamesâs âThe Real Thingâ could make a fortune off her face; he could really go to town. Not only was she not the real thing, she was, he bet, never the same thing.

âMy name is Digby Plant. Iâm a private investigator and I understand you knew Billy Maples better than anybody.â

She liked that (as he knew she would) and stepped back and waved him in.

What he saw in the entryway was an eclectic mix of what appeared, at first glance, to be junk. He supposed it would appear at second and third glances still junk to the uninitiatedâand given the dark icons in the wall niches, he imagined initiation had a lot to do with Mrs. Riffley. At the very least one would imagine the person who put everything together to be well traveled and worldly, and would not question (for example) the purpose of the owl, flightless in a stunted tree, or the cheetah skin rug hanging on the wall next to a poster for the old film *The Blue Angel.* He did not think Marlene Dietrich had owned a cheetah in that film.

He followed her into an interesting study or library or den, where two zebra-striped love seats faced off. Between them was a coffee table of some kind of gnarled wood, glass-topped, and on which rested another small piece of gnarled wood whose purpose he couldnât discern.

Beneath the glass were several pages of what looked like an ancient, flaking manuscript written in Arabic or Hindi or Sanskritâwho knew? He thought the squiggles were extremely dense and black for a document several thousand years oldâas she would no doubt claim. The visitor here would certainly not lack for ways to start a conversation.

âCare for one?â She was drinking something green, ground grass, no doubt, and offering the same to him. *No thanks.* âI would absolutely love a glass of water.â The talented Mrs. Ripley, he thought, would be able to garner something from that modest request that would make her appear water-worldly.

âTap? Well? Spring? Iâve some excellent Zandinski I get from Saint Petersburg. Of course, itâs improved by a shot of vodka.â

He returned her smile. âIf you have any San Pellegrino, that would be fine.â

âOf course I have it.â

Anyone who wouldnât could hardly hold her head up, could she?

She set her green concoction on the table and rose. Then she fluttered away. She was wearing harem trousers. They were yellow and the fancy sequined top was the color of her drink.

While she was gone Melrose looked around the room. Particularly intriguing were the small black objects hanging on the wall between various animal heads. He debated what they might be without going any closer to them. There were photographs studding the walls, of course. One was a shot of mountains, or a mountain, in front of which stood a small group of people who were either setting out to climb it, or had returned, or were just considering it. Where was it? The Swiss Alps? Annapurna? Kilimanjaro? The hill behind the roundabout just coming into Northampton?

Then she was back with his Pellegrino, which she set on the table. âItâs almost impossible to get staff anymore, especially if one wants a maid without an accent. Really, every little shop is managed by foreigners. Thank God for Fortnumâs! I confess to getting many of my meals from their food section.â

âI rather like Harrods Food Hallâ (into which he had never

ventured), he said, wanting to show that he too was in the habit of pick-up meals.

âOh, absolutely. My cook of twenty years got married and moved to Haworth, poor thing.â

âAh, Haworth. I was there just a few years ago.â What he remembered of Haworth was not the BrontÃ« house, which he had neglected, but the visitorsâ information center and that beastly boy.

âBilly was very lucky in that cook of his.â

âMrs. Jessup?â It was out before he could call it back. How could he know Mrs. Jessup?

She *was* surprised. âYouâre acquainted with Mrs. Jessup? How extraordinary. Well, in your line of work, I expect you talk to everyone.â

He silently blessed her for supplying the reason, even if she did make detective work out to be only a step above shopkeeping. âIn the line of investigating, I naturally question everyone in the house. Iâve found that oneâs servants often know more about one than the wife or husband knows.â

Laughing, she said, âYes. Itâs one of the reasons I was against marrying Billy.â

Melrose frowned. âMrs. Jessup? His cook?â

âNo, no. The man who worked for him. Kurt Brunner. One would think he was a bodyguard. I wondered, really, just *what* he was! Billy would say only that he kept things in order.â

âWhat did you think?â Melroseâs smile was sly.

Angela Riffleyâs was slyer. âI naturally tried to shut it out, but it was all so ambiguous.â

Melrose waited for something to make sense.

âKurt had too much influence.â She lit a cigarette with the brown stump on the table.

âInfluence in what way?â

She exhaled a plume of smoke that looked as fancy as her clothes. âOver what Billy did.â

âDid Billy Maples need direction?â

âOf course not. He was perfectly capableââ She pulled a handkerchief from her sleeve.

Lord knew what else she had up it. Apparently she had suddenly remembered how close she and Billy had been, and now he was dead and she deeply felt the loss. âItâs awful, just awful. He should have stayedââ

Again, Melrose waited, but she stopped. âShould have stayed?â

The handkerchief waved that away, but Melrose persisted: âYou mean stayed in London? Or in Rye? Have you been there, then?â

She shook her head. âNo. He wanted me to come, butââ

Again, she didnât finish. Melrose inclined his head toward the photograph beside the fireplace mantel. âWould that be you there with that group?â

âOh, lord, yes. Monte Bianco. Yes, thereâs always been a dispute as to which country its summit falls in. Hell to climb, isnât it? It was nearly the finish of me.â

âIndeed?â Melrose blinked and blinked and thought of no reply at all to this.

âIt was one of my first attempts, and I was quite unseasoned. I very nearly fell into a crevasse.â She shuddered pleasantly. âWell, one with little experience shouldnât attempt to climb Mont Blanc, obviously.â

Giving it back to the French for the moment. Melrose sighed. âNow,â she said, âyou say youâd heard I knew Billy well? Who might have told you that?â

âI canât really tell you; you know, protecting oneâs sources and all that.â

âAh. I think I know who it might have been.â She smiled. âYes, I probably knew Billy better than anybody.â

âAnd why was that?â Melrose sipped his Pellegrino.

âI think because when he was around me he could be himself.â

Melrose could imagine a lot of things happening around Mrs. Ripley, but selfhood wasnât one of them.

She said, âI donât think many people knew how introspective Billy was. How very serious. I think itâs why he was so moody.â

âWas he?â

âYes. I could tell you in confidenceââ the offer apparently included her moving from her side of the coffee table to his ââbut I expect I shouldnât.â

âThatâs too bad. Have you talked to police about all this?â

âYes, certainly. But there are a few things Iâve held back.â

âDonât,â he said, leaning into her space, âhold back on my account.â He smiled suggestively.

She laughed suggestively. âI think perhaps youâre a dangerous man, Mr. Plant.â

âNot a bit, not a bit.â Something sheâd said had snagged on a

mental rock. Oh, yes. The cook, Mrs. Jessup. âI thought you said youâd never been to Lamb House. How did you come to see Mrs. Jessup?â

âBillyâs cook? When she was here. I mean in the Sloane Street flat. Sheâd do that, you knowâcome to cook for him. Them.â

Melrose wondered. âAll the way from Rye? She must have been quite devoted to him.â

âActually, I didnât get the impression she liked Billy very much. Well, *approved* of him, I should say. How is it we get off approving or disapproving? She came up to London occasionally. I believe her family lives in Lambeth. Horrors.â

âYes, horrors.â Sharing a joke. âWhen was this?â

âIâm not sure, really.â She cocked her head. âFor a private investigator, you donât seem to know muchâif youâll pardon me.â

âAnd for one who isnât, you seem to know a great deal.â

âI? Oh, *I* know nothing.â

He pretended to reflect. âStill, you must have an opinion as to what happened?â

âIt wonât, I expect, be the same as yours.â

âIâm only collecting information. Details.â

âHave you spoken to Rose Ames?â

Rose Ames. âHis grandmother?â

âHe was fond of her. Of both his grandparents, the two still living.â

âMrs. Ames. I believe she was the cookâs bÃªte noire.â

âAh. Sheâs an odd little woman.â

âMrs. Ames?â

âNo. Mrs. Jessup. I canât quite make her out.â

âIs their any reason to? Her dislike of Mrs. Ames does seem excessive.â

âSo you *do* know a lot. I donât imagine sheâd look kindly at a Lambeth background.â

Melrose frowned. âMrs. Jessup?â

â*No.* Mrs. Ames. Rose would hardly be from Lambeth, would she? You have talked to her?â

Melrose got a wicked little smile for his troubles.

âOf course. We do seem to be talking at cross-purposes a bit.â

âThat, or youâre confused. The cook lives, or lived, in Lambeth with her brother.â She rose and collected the two glasses.

Here he was on firm ground: âAh, yes. Bertie.â

He had outmaneuvered her in the details department.

âBertie? Oh, yes. Gilbert.â

Her parting shot.

Too bad she didnât know it was a bullâs-eye.

He stared. *âWait!â*

She turned, tilted her head, looked at him with her wide blue eyes. âWhat? Did I say something?â She smiled and added, âAt last?â

That was a good one, he thought, as she returned to the sofa and sat down, empty glasses on the table now.

âGilbert. Is his name by any chance Gilbert Snow? Her brother?â

She had no idea why this was a point, but sheâd take whatever points she could get. âYes, thatâs right.â

Since she had been moving in his direction ever since heâd walked in, she wouldnât mind. He reached behind her, clamped his hand on her neck, and pulled her over. After a long and appreciative kiss, Melrose whispered in her ear: âThe talented Mrs. Ripley.â

She sat and stared, for once unable to recover speech.

He said good-bye, walked out of the study and to the front door and through it.

He pressed the mobile, as good as a kiss, against his ear.

FIFTY

âWhereâs DI Aguilar?â Jury asked, receiver crushed between shoulder and chin, one hand around a mug of tea and the other stuffing his shirt into his pants. It was after nine and heâd overslept. He was in a hurry. âIâve been trying her mobile, but thereâs no answer.â

âI donât know,â said Chilten. âShe was at the station all night.â

âNo, she wasnât. I tried to call her.â

âDoes she have a life? I donât know if she has a life.â

Jury said nothing except âMeet me at the Zetter.â He paused. âNo, wait. Just bring in Gilbert Snow for questioning. Take him to the station and Iâll meet you there.

Chilten was silent, then said doubtfully, âYou said Gilbert Snow. The waiter?â

âThatâs right. He shot Billy Maples.â Jury drank some tea and listened to the silence. âRon? You there?â

Ron Chilten cleared his throat. â*Snow* shot him? For Christâs sakes, why?â

âWell, if I knew that, and if I had some hard evidence, Iâd say arrest him.â He thought some more. âDI Aguilar had that dinner bagged, right?â Sheâs brilliant. He smiled.

âYe-ah.â Ron brought it out in two syllables, as if the prospect were lethal.

âThen get it to the lab for DNA testing.â

âBilly Maplesââ

âIâm not talking about Billy. Iâm talking about who ate it.â

Jury took the silence to mean understanding, repeated his request for Ron to go to the Zetter, and hung up.

He gulped his tea and thought of Luâs having that dinner bagged.

âWhy?â

âWhy not? You never know.â

Indeed you donât.

Jury had his coat on and was out the door.

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They put Gilbert Snow in a bleak little room at the Islington station. It was the smallest of them. Jury preferred it for its claustrophobic ambiance. They sat across from Snow at a scratched-up table.

âDonât know what youâre talking about,â said Gilbert in a perfectly equable tone, as if shooting Billy Maples were not only beyond his ken but should have been beyond anybodyâs. He even gave a little harrumphing laugh.

âYes, you do, Gil,â Jury said. âLetâs go through it. Who took Maplesâs so-called dinner order? Who said he ordered coffee for two? Who made a point of telling us Maples was very particular about that? You did; you said so yourself. There was no one to verify that there really had been an order, either for the food or for the coffee. What you needed was a reason to go to his room *and* make it appear that he was expecting a visitor. That he was expecting someone was important. We would certainly be trying to track down Billyâs guest for he would, presumably, be Billyâs killer.â

Jury was up and walking slowly about. âThen the murder weapon turns up at the Sloane Street flat. Throwing yet more suspicion upon Kurt Brunner. How did you manage that? Whatâs your relationship with Brunner?â

Gilbert Snow sat quite still, following Juryâs circuit of the room with a blank look. The question regarding Brunner brought a cold smile to his now expressionless face.

Jury leaned against the wall. âWhatâs your connection with Brunner?â he asked again.

Sullenly, Gilbert Snow looked at him. âI havenât one. I never met the man. I want my brief.â He folded his arms across his chest. âIâve not got to answer any questions without a solicitor.â

âWhyâs that, Gil?â asked Ron Chilten. âAre you in trouble here?â

Gilbert gave another guttural laugh, dismissing Chiltenâs question, and leaned back in his chair and looked at them with hooded eyes.

He reminded Jury of a tortoise: slow, plodding, but certain of where he was going.

No one spoke.

Into this silence stepped Detective Inspector Aguilar.

As if heâd been found smoking weed in the toilet by his third-form teacher, Jury pulled away from the wall.

Lu Aguilar stood in the doorway, pointing her chin at Jury and tilting her head back: *out here.*

Jury left the room, after telling the tape he was doing so.

Aguilar snapped out a question: âWhat in the fuck are you doing, Superintendent?â

Back to dirty words and titles.

âYou arrested this man Snow without any evidence. No murder weapon, no motive.â

âYouâll certainly grant me it screams *opportunity.*â

She took this in. âYes, all right, thatâs true. But the murder weapon was found in Brunnerâs desk, and Brunner has a *motive.* This manââshe hooked her thumb around toward the door behind which sat Gilbert Snowââhas neither. What happened to Occamâs razor? Are you going to bring in Benny Keegan tomorrow? Itâd make about as much sense.â

âThis isnât over territory, is it, Lu? You were the one who wanted me to stay on this case.â

âTerritory? For Godâs sakes, did you just hear what I said?â

âDo you want to know? Or do you simply want to throw dagger looks at me?â

The dagger disappeared back into its sheath somewhere. But she held the look. So did he. Would either of them have looked away if Ron hadnât come out into the hall?

âItâs lawyer time. Heâs raising hell.â Ron went back in.

Lu opened her mouth to say something when her mobile rang. She listened, frowning, said her gloomy thanks, flipped the phone shut. âThat was the lab. The DNA will take a week. At least.â She sighed heavily and leaned against the wall.

âIt was Snow who ate that sandwich,â said Jury. âNobody else could have done it. Nobody else *would* have done it. It explains the jacket. Billy didnât take it off because he didnât eat. Beat a confession out of Snow; thatâs all we need.â

âThatâs all?â She smiled wanly and pushed away from the wall. âIâve gotten in trouble once or twice with the way I treat suspects, you know, breaking plates over their heads, that kind of thingââ She shrugged. âOf course, itâs still a long way from eating a meal to shooting a man.â She chewed around the end of her thumb.

âWhat possible reason could Snow have for eating the food except

for making it look as if Billy ate it?â

âBut we donât have the proof yet.â

âHe doesnât know that, does he?â

A WPC poked her head in the door this time. âCall for you, Superintendent.â

Jury picked up the receiver. âJury.â

âGod!â complained Melrose Plant.

âNot really, but go ahead.â

âIâve been through fifteen of your cronies this morning. Why does it take fifteen connectionsâ?â

âThatâs the life of a private eye, Digby. Any luck?â

âYes. But what I donât understand is why you donât know this. Donât you do background checks on suspects and so forth?â

âKnow what?â

âWhat is it?â

âGilbert Snow is the brother of Billyâs cook.â

Juryâs mouth opened, but didnât say anything for two seconds. Then, â*What?* Jessup is his *sister*?â

âThatâs the way it works. If heâs her brother, then sheâs his sister. Without fail.â

Lu Aguilar was mouthing *what?*

âHow in hell does Angela Riffley know this?â

âOh, come on: sheâs the talented Mrs. Ripley.â

âThanks.â Jury hung up, said to Lu, âI think weâve got our connection between Snow and the victim.â He told her.

She stared at him, was still standing stiffly as he started out of the room.

âOh come on, Inspector. Letâs break a few plates.â

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Snowâs expression, when Aguilar sat down opposite him, was hugely condescending. *The lady detective. Pfffft.* He looked her up and down and pursed his lips.

Jury, leaning against the wall again, felt his hand twitch, wanting to curl into a fist. He wondered how much of Luâs time was spent putting up with this sort of reaction.

She reached over, shut off the tape, leaned across the table, pulled his shirt collar tight with those long fingers, and got into his face. âListen: we donât *think* youâre the shooter, Gilbert, we *know* you are.â

He looked as if he were choking and grabbed her hand.

With a sour smile, she let go and turned the tape back on.

Rubbing his neck, he said, âEven if the gunâs not mine? Even if itâs goddamned Brunnerâs?â

âYou know, the funny thing about this gun is its lack of prints.â

Gilbert Snow hawked up a laugh. âI guess not. Wouldnât Brunner have wiped them off?â

âAnd then tossed the gun in a *desk drawer*?â

Snow looked away. âPeople do funny things.â He was inspecting his nails as if sheâd just given him a manicure.

âNo. They do stupid things. In your hurry to get rid of your own prints, you wiped all of the prints off. You have any siblings, Gilbert?â

She had changed course and he looked up, surprised. Also confused. âWhatâdâyou mean?â

âSiblings. Brothers? Sisters?â

Snow was calculating, Jury knew, how far theyâd come. He could hardly deny a fact so easily checked by police.

âYeah, I do, a sister. Why?â

Slowly, Lu smiled. âJust curious.â She opened the folder before her, and seemed to read, and let him sweat. âBack to the gun.â She looked up from the folder, leaned toward him again, but this time as if they shared a secret. âGilbert, it was stupid in another way, leaving that gun in Brunnerâs desk. If it werenât for that, we might never have connected you with this murder. And if we hadnât, we might never have found out about your sister. Annie Jessup. Billy Maplesâs cook. So why donât you just tell us what *her* little part in this is?â

Blood had suffused Gilbert Snowâs face. âI told you, I want a solicitor. I know my rights.â

âAbsolutely. Weâll get you one. God knows you need one. But think of it this way: Annie Jessup *might* have nothing to do with this. Annie might be innocent, or if she was acting for you, might have done so in ignorance. So if you can tell us about her, save us some trouble, it might pay off for you. We might work out a deal with your lawyer.â She smiled. âWhen you get one.â

He sat there, his face rigid and red. âI know my rights.â

âRight.â She told the tape the interview was terminated and shut it off.

Then she stood up and looked down at him. âWrong choice, *Gil.*â

They walked out.

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âDo we have enough to pick her up?â Jury asked, knowing the answer.

âRichard, itâs going to be hard enough holding Snow. Iâve got seventy-two hours, and then I need something real. Like DNA.â

âIn seventy-two hours you could get blood from a turnip.â

âIâm wondering whoâs the turnip, him or me.â

They paced, Jury and Aguilar, walked around the empty room, circled around each other.

She stopped and said, âAre we absolutely certain it isnât Kurt Brunner?â

âYes. Snowâs whole attitude, his failure to mention Jessupâs being in Lamb House, the half-eaten dinnerâof course we do. We can certainly question her.â Jury paused. âBut wait a minute. If police go marching into Lamb Houseâ¦â Jury lifted her mobile from the table, looked at his watch, and dialed Boringâs.

He knew it was the young ginger-haired porter who answered because he spoke in a whelping voice. ââAllo! Borinâs!â

âMr. Plant, please.â

There arose a mild commotion at the other end as if any request for Mr. Plant would find them not knowing how to deal with it.

Finally, Mr. Plant pulled up and answered. He sounded enormously pleased with himself. Jury said, âYouâre not through yet. Youâre going back to Lamb House.â

âWhat?â

âWork your way into Mrs. Jessupâs good graces; see what you can find out.â

âYou mean where she stands vis-Ã -vis her brother? What if she doesnât know anything? What if she had nothing to do with it?â

âThatâs possible, but Iâm betting she did. Heâll get in touch with her. He wants a solicitor, so heâll certainly want a phone.â

âSheâll know we suspect her of something, wonât she?â

âYes, but it wonât really frighten her because Gilbert Snow will be out of custody.â

Jury watched Lu Aguilar try to assimilate that bit of information. He told Melrose to get back to Rye as soon as possible and flipped the phone shut. âYouâre going to have to let him go.â

âWhat?â

Was that everyoneâs word for him these days? âWeâve got to make the Jessup woman feel safe; weâve got to convince her nothingâs happened to her brother. That weâre still plugged in to Kurt

Brunner.â

âWho is this Plant person? Why are you letting some friend of yours take charge of Annie Jessup?â

âBecause we canât. Thatâs what Iâve been talking about.â

She started walking again, her arms folded across her chest. âI donât like this.â

âNeither do I, Lu, but whatâve we got? If one of us walks in there, or one of the local police, sheâll know immediately whatâs wrong. Look, this will solve your problem of the seventy-two-hour hold, wonât it?â

She had to agree to that.

âThis friend of mine is the one who discovered Mrs. Jessup was Snowâs sister.â

âHe did?â

Jury nodded. âSo heâs not some crazy whoâs running around London thinking heâs Sherlock Holmes.â

Actually, he was, but Jury saw no reason to share that with DI Aguilar.

FIFTY-ONE

âI canât imagine,â said Melrose, sitting in the Lamb House kitchen, âKurt Brunnerâs doing such a thing. I was truly shocked.â He was watching Mrs. Jessup slice through a roast lamb, carving it for that eveningâs dinner. Her face was pink with the effort, an effort more than was called for, surely. It was only a leg of lamb. On the other end of the pastry table, little lemon tarts and custard tarts and airy little cakes rested. There were two large pans in the oven. He found the smell of the mince pies tantalizing. But he wondered what on earth she did with all of this baking, as he himself ate only a miteâs portion of it.

âIâve never come right out and said, but I never much cared for Mr. Brunner. I always found him a bit of a mystery, and kind of too secretive.â

âReally?â Melrose munched on a biscuit that had come, as usual, with his tea. âI found him to be quiet, but never secretive.â

She regarded him with a smile that Melrose found unpleasant. Or was this merely his reaction to Juryâs insistence that she was part of the plot to murder Billy Maples?

âGilbert Snow hasnât the wit to have done this on his own,â Jury had said.

The cook put down her knife and went to the oven to peek at the little mince pies and slide them out. âI might be prejudiced, but I donât have much liking for the Germans.â She set the cookie sheet on the table.

âYes, you did mention that before.â He set down his teacup. âYou mean because of the war?â

âI certainly do.â

âThatâs a rather old battle to be fighting, isnât it?â He laughed, quite deliberately, hoping the laugh would set her off.

She took a brief break from the meat carving. âYou think that us that lived it should forget?â

Obviously, Mrs. Jessup hadnât. So he trotted out an old shibboleth to further annoy her. âNo. But itâs best to let bygones be bygones, wouldnât you say?â

âNo, I most certainly would *not.*â

The doorbell rang.

âWho can that be? Itâs not Wednesday.â

Cheerily, Melrose said, âWho indeed? Iâll see!â and left the kitchen.

Â

He had come back last night from London and sat for a long time in the study, thinking. Every once in a while heâd pick up the book splayed over the chair arm and read.

It was *The Turn of the Screw.* He was looking to Henry James for inspiration. The housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, was aptly namedâa pleasant, ordinary woman, her thinking opaque, without an ounce of imagination, and a poor companion and confidante for the unnamed governess, who had entirely too *much* imagination. Or at least thatâs how Melrose read it. He could be wrong; those two children, Miles and Flora, perhaps really *were* trying to drive her away.

Melrose walked back and forth, back and forth. *Oh, come on man, give me an idea!* This âlittle problemâ would surely have interested the Master. *Come on, itâs right down your street!*

There were no children like these, like Flora and Miles. So why was the reader prepared to believe in them? Because of the ambiguity? Because all of the events that transpired could be accounted for in at least two different ways?

Ha! Melrose tried to imagine Henry James dealing with the dreadful Minnie Babcock, dealing with her in fiction, if not in fact. He couldnât imagine James dealing with any children in fact. In his mindâs eye, Melrose watched Henry James exiting the kitchen from which falling crockery, breaking glass, and screams issued.

Melrose rewound the tape in his mind. The glass breaking as if it had been inadvertently swept from the table, glass tumbling, shards of it sent flying. Henry James would have registered every single shard.

Try to be one of those people on whom nothing is lost!

Suddenly he had it.

Melrose sat forward so fast he might have been shot in the back.

He walked some more. He just didnât know who the original perpetrator was.

His mind was full of the beastly Minnie Babcock, the effect sheâd produced in Mrs. Jessup. Yes, he was pretty sure he had it, or at least the part that sent the cook into a frenzy.

Right then, last night, he had smiled a Peter Quint smile and picked up the phone.

Â

Today, the doorbell rang.

Who can that be? Itâs not Wednesday.

Who indeed? Iâll see!

Melrose all but ran to the front door.

He opened the door and looked down. âHello, Malcolm.â Farther down. âAnd Waldo. Do come in.â

Malcolm did, but Waldo paused to raise his leg and pee on the step.

Melrose saw this as an auspicious beginning.

He took them into the study. He said, âMalcolm, Iâm releasing you from the confines of childhood, from all moral and civic obligations to your fellow man.â

Malcolm chewed his gum a little slower, as if the gum itself didnât want to miss any of this intriguing harangue. He swept the unruly hair from his forehead and said, âYou ought to be up on a box in Hyde Park, you.â

âI know. Anyway. This freedom of movement is limited to *only* the kitchen and the garden, for I imagine you might have some overweening need to rappel. Thereâs quite a good stone wall out there.â

Waldo gave out a murmurous growl. They both looked at Melrose with a frown.

Malcolm asked, âSo whatâs all this in aid of?â

âIâll tell you if you agree not to tell anyone else.â

âWhoâd I tell around here? Thereâs only us.â

Waldo walked away and began sniffing the furniture.

âPlease remember: this is a very famous house and that makes everything in it valuable.â

âExcept in the kitchen?â

Melrose was reassured. Malcolm was a quick study.

âRight. Now I leave it to you to decide what is the most annoying

behavior in the circumstances.â

âOkay, but whatâs these circumstances?â

âGood question. I want you to rattle the cook, you know, a really good rattleâdrive her crazy. No, let me rephrase that: I want you to make her really angry.â

Malcolmâs forehead pleated into little folds as he smiled slyly. âNo problem,â he said, pleased. âWhy?â

âI want her to incriminate herself.â

Malcolmâs eyes widened and he blew out his cheeks. He looked as if this might be the opportunity of a lifetime. âI bet that Scotland Yard detectiveâs behind all this.â

âYouâre absolutely right.â

âIs this to do with Billyâs murder?â

âIt most certainly is. If you can wring something out of herâI mean, Miss JesâMrs. Jessup, you would be instrumental in solving the case.â

Malcolm fairly glowed with righteous purpose. âProbâly she wonât want Waldo in her kitchen.â He gave one of his snorting little laughs.

âDepend upon it. But firstââ Melrose reached into the sitting room and plucked a coil of rope from the desk where it had been waiting by the James journal. âThereâs an excellent old brick wall round back, as you know. Come on.â

Â

Melrose returned to the kitchen, where the leg of lamb, looking succulent and pink, rested on the table, nicely sliced. Here would be an unwelcome remark! âYou know, Mrs. Jessup, itâs not really safe to serve rare lamb. Thereâs some bacteria that might get into it, canât remember the name of it, but it can be fatal.â

Oh, *that* was a hit with the blood pressure!

âBegging your pardon, sir, but Iâve heard that criticism before and I donât much care for it. You think Iâm out to poison you, do you?â

He held his hands, palms out, to ward off her words. âSorry, I wasnât criticizing your cooking, Iââ

âWhoâs that child and whatâs he doing out there? Look!â

The lamb forgotten now, she was looking out of the window. Melrose came to stand beside her. âOh, thatâs just Malcolm. Donât you recognize him? Heâs a cousin of Billy Maples. His uncle is Roderick. He lives with them. Heâs to be my dinner guest. But I donât see how heâll make it up the wall, do you? Not with that dog.â

Mrs. Jessup stared at Melrose. She was momentarily speechless, hearing that Melrose not only countenanced this affair but that he was largely responsible for it. âNow, sir, you go out there and get that boy out of the garden!â

Ah! A promising sign; she had forgotten her place enough to start ordering Lord Ardry around. âIf you insist,â said Melrose, sighing.

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âItâs just priming the pump,â he said to Malcolm, as the boy unhitched his end of the rope.

Waldo got free on his own. âYou know, I donât think Waldo would even get halfway up, the way you tie that rope.â

âItâs just for show,â Malcolm answered obscurely.

Malcolm and Waldo, both looking surly, followed Melrose into the kitchen.

âHere they are!â said Melrose, as if Mrs. Jessup had only wanted boy and dog in for tea and tarts. He made introductions all around, met by Mrs. Jessup with her hands on her hips, glaring.

âMight I ask what youâre doing here, young man?â

Malcolm had immediately sussed out that dayâs baking and headed for the pastry table. âCome by train,â said Malcolm, reaching for a mince pie.

Waldo was sniffing up a storm, not neglecting Mrs. Jessupâs ankles.

She gave him quite a nasty kick. âI wonât have a dog in my kitchen!â

âWhy?â said Malcolm. âHe ainât done nuffinâ.â

Ah! That paean to the excellent British public school!

Melrose watched as Malcolm handily picked up a little cake square waiting to be iced. Malcolm stuck his finger in the bowl and iced it himself.

Bravo! Bravo! Melrose wanted to applaud.

Mrs. Jessup was revving from zero to eighty in fifteen seconds, her face growing mottled as a house in flames.

Malcolm saw this and smiled. Then he looked at the pastry table, stood back, cake in hand, and in a carefully calibrated move led Minnie one better: in a little jump and with his foot striking its edge, upturned the whole table, everything, including the too pink leg of lamb, and sent it clattering to the floor.

It made the most godawful noise!

In the seconds it took her to scream out, âNo! *No! Dora! Janie! You old devil!*â she had picked up the knife and would have been on Malcolm in a flash had the table not been between them, and had not both Melrose and Waldo launched themselves at her (Waldo beating out Melrose by a nose).

What struck Melrose as most dramatic in all of this was not the action, but the voice yelling *âDora! Janie! You old devil!â* For what he heard was another voice, the voice of the governess, yelling *âPeter Quint, you devil!â*

Henry James still lived in the Lamb House kitchen.

The National Trust would make a meal of it, if they were smart.

FIFTY-TWO

Local police took Annie Jessup to the station where they waited for London to come and collect her, London in this case being Richard Jury and Ron Chilten. A Sussex WPC had accompanied Mrs. Jessup to her home to pick up a few things she would need while she was in London. They didnât know how long that would be. It was all very easy, Mrs. Jessup making no demur, saying nothing.

It was much the same nothing her brother had said that morning in Islington. They appeared to share some belief, almost superstitious, that there was safety in silence.

Sitting now across the table in one of the rooms of the station in Cinque Port Street, Jury assured her that safety did not lie in silence; indeed silence could sink her.

âBecause if you donât help us out here, Annie, youâll be certainly looking at a charge of accessory to murder, even if you didnât pull the trigger.â Jury said this while leaning over the table. âWe know what happened. Your being silent as the grave is only going to make it harder.â

She sat there with her big imitation leather purse pushed like a breastplate against herself, arms folded across it, looking as stern as if sheâd just taken on the three of them as staff and was regretting it. She looked at them as if they were raw country people whom sheâd have to whip into shape.

Jury leaned back, as incensed by this woman as he had been by Gilbert Snow. They truly seemed to think they were exempt from the ordinary rules of behavior.

âWiggins.â Jury nodded for him to tell it.

âIt was that âdoomed voyage.â Remember you were telling me about it and that you had two sisters who drowned. There were instances of bigger children pushing the younger, littler ones away

from the lifeboats, pushing them into the sea and even pushing out children whoâd already managed to climb in. Thatâs what happened to Janie and Dora, isnât it? They got pushed out of the raft. Horrible, it mustâve been, completely ruthless. But these were children, after all, and you shouldnât, in the circumstances, have held them to such exacting standards.â

Jury could see the steam rising in Annie Jessup. She had to fight with herself to hold her tongue. Wiggins couldnât have taken a better tack than to minimize the childrenâs behavior in this dreadful voyage.

âYouâll be accessory to murder, you realize that,â said Jury. âGilbert was the shooter, but youâre the one who stashed the gun in Kurt Brunnerâs desk. Not a smart move, really. For you, it was easy to get into the Sloane Street flat; youâd been there several times before, probably had your own key.â

She simply stared at him. Heâd never felt in such a witchy presence before. He rose. So did Wiggins. âSergeant Chilten will take you to London,â said Jury.

They left.

Â

âTheyâre both going to do themselves in with this not talking,â he said to Ron. âTell your boss she might have more success in getting something out of the woman, given sheâs a woman, too.â

âMy boss,â said Chilten, âisnât really going to like that reasoning, but Iâll tell her.â

Jury smiled. âI have to call her anyway. Got your mobile on you?â

âYouâre worse than a guy whoâs always filching cigarettes.â Ron handed Jury his phone. He said, âLook, Iâm not getting all this. Whoâs the guilty party here?â

Jury was pushing numbers with his thumb. âThereâs only one person it couldâve been. *Youâve got a photo and a negativeâ¦You canât get them to match up.* Jury had imagined Harry Johnson saying this. Heâd been right. The two things that were off by a fraction were two different attempts to evacuate children: the Kindertransport and the ship *City of Benares*. Children from Germany, children from England.

Jury walked away. When she finally came on the phone, he told her what had happened and told her what he wanted her to do.

Without argument or exclamation, she said sheâd get right on it and hung up.

Jury handed the phone back to Ron Chilten, who was talking to

Sergeant Wiggins.

He folded a stick of gum into his mouth. âYou going to take the kid home?â Ron looked over at the twoâMelrose and Malcolmâwaiting on a bench.

âWhich one do you mean?â

Wiggins snorted. âConsidering they just took care of half this case for you, you could show more appreciation.â Wiggins loving it that Jury was giving someone else a hard time.

âYouâre right, Wiggins. Letâs go.â

Â

âMaybe Iâm just thick, but who was it?â asked Melrose as they stood beside the car.

Jury was holding Waldo, whose attempt to pee on the leg of the woman police constable was quickly squelched. âWho was what?â

Wiggins had unlocked the car and Jury tossed Waldo in.

âHey, watchit!â said Malcolm. âWaldoâs delicate.â

Waldo? Delicate? âItâs all that rappelling you make him do.â

âYou know,â said Melrose, climbing in the backseat with Malcolm, âperfectly damned well *who*! The one in the raft, the child who shoved out the others.â

Jury, in the passenger seat beside Wiggins, turned to look into the back. âThink about itââ

âNo, I donât want to *think* about it, I want you to tell me.â

Jury was shaking his head. âNo, no. Think about it. Thereâs only one person who fills the bill. Only one.â He turned around again, and to Wiggins said, âDonât tell him, Wiggins.â

Wiggins hadnât planned on it, since Wiggins was trying to work it out for himself.

Â

It was Malcolm who pointed out the Happy Eater ahead, drowning in its own light. Heâd missed the promised dinner at Lamb House, but accepted Melroseâs apology as he could understand getting Billyâs killer took precedence.

However, he had limits. He had not had dinner and the Happy Eater was approaching.

Jury told him he was in luck because Sergeant Wiggins was driving and heâd never passed up a Happy Eater in his life.

They parked and piled out of the car and into the cheerful

environs of the same Happy Eater Jury and Wiggins had stopped at just a few days ago on their way to Rye.

To Jury it seemed like an eternity.

Â

They sat with coffees and teas before them, Malcolm insisting on coffee.

âGod bless Minnie Babcock,â said Melrose. âI just donât want to be around when He does. It was the table going overââ

âWhoâs Minnie Babcock? Iâm the one who did that,â said Malcolm, handing down a piece of a roll to Waldo underneath the table.

Patiently, Melrose said, âYes, you did; you also did it better.â

âRight,â said Malcolm.

âDonât be modest.â

Wiggins said, âIt made her think of the life raft her sisters got shoved off by *somebody*.â Pointedly, he looked at Jury. Jury did not respond. âI was telling you about that doomed voyage thing, but you were only interested in the Kindertransport and paid no attention.â

Lord, how sanctimonious Wiggins could sound! âAgain, I feel the reproof, Wiggins.â

Wiggins was mining that reply for sarcasm.

âSeriously,â Jury added. He meant it.

The same waitress brought them their food: eggs and chips, eggs and sausage and chips, beans on toast, a mountain of toasted tea cakes, and one enormous hamburger. Malcolm was having the hamburger.

Jury said, âI donât think I ever want to see another hamburger.â

âWell, when the Happy Eaters close,â said Wiggins, âand the Burger Kings take over, youâll be seeing a lot more of them.â

Malcolm stared. âWhatâdâya mean theyâre *closing*?â He put down his hamburger.

Wiggins told him the story of the planned takeover. Malcolm was scandalized. âThey canât do that!â

For the remainder of the meal these two hearts that beat as one paid no attention to their late-night companions.

Â

Roderick Maples was waiting by a window and came immediately when their car pulled up. He seemed genuinely glad to see Malcolm,

who had, in all of this, acquired a kind of luster.

However, he would not take all the credit. âWaldo did his part, too! He *rushed* her! *Splaaat!*â

Waldo took this as a direction and ran around the pillars and raised his leg to one.

âIf I could have a word, Mr. Maples,â said Jury.

âOf course.â

They went into the living room.

Yes, the Klimt and the Soutine paintings had been kept by friends of his fatherâs. He had remained in touch with the family. The son, who had been Roderickâs age then, upon finding out who they really belonged to now, crated them up, and sent them to Sussex.

âAnd you know how your father came by them?â

Roderick didnât answer this question; instead he asked, âHow do you come to know all of this?â

âBilly knew.â Perhaps he shouldnât have said that; there was nothing to be gained except to see Roderickâs stricken look.

âIâm sorry, Mr. Maples. Weâll be going. Malcolm really helped us.â

âIâm glad of that.â Roderick stood and shook hands. âWe should pay more attention to the boy.â

âYes, you should.â

Jury put out his hand to Malcolm. âThanks, Malcolm. You were brilliant.â

Malcolm took Juryâs hand. He looked as if heâd just been released from a black hole or a mine shaft into the bright air, despite the darkness of the night.

âThanks to you, too,â he said. He picked Waldo up and went inside.

Â

At the same time, in London, DI Aguilar was knocking on a door. A light went on in the hallway and the door opened.

âMrs. Ames? Rose Ames? You may remember meâ¦â

FIFTY-THREE

The call came as she was switching off the overhead lights. The fluorescent buzz stopped and they flickered out, sometimes together, sometimes separately. She liked this phenomenon, as if the lighting in the morgue were standing up for itself, somehow showing off its regenerative powers, showing it was not dead yet.

She was always the last to leave; she was the last to wipe down one of the stainless steel tables; she wanted the room left spotlessly clean, feeling it was the least they could do for the dead.

For her, the dead were fully dead only if forgotten. After she had collected coat, purse, scarf, extra shoes, she said good night to the bank of stainless steel enclosures. She always did this, said good night, sometimes reciting a little Dylan Thomas, or a little Shakespeare, only a line or two, sometimes singing a few bars of a song. And always the snatch of words or song had the phrase âgood nightâ in it.

The call came as she went out the door, a little after midnight. She sighed. There was always something, something terrible. It amazed her that anyone lived past ten years old. She fished her mobile out of her purse, walked toward the car, alone in the lot.

âDr. Nancy,â she said, then listened and stopped in her tracks. âOh my God, no. Iâll be there in five minutes.â Five minutes didnât allow much time to get from St. Jamesâs to Islington.

She ran to her car and peeled out of the area. She went through three red lights, didnât give way to traffic in roundabouts, flew past other cars, leaning on her horn.

When she got to Upper Street, it wasnât hard to find the site of the accident. Ambushed by lightsâred, blue, and whiteâshe stopped, left the engine running, nearly fell out of the car, and shoved her way through the layers of the curious, who were ogling the wreck. She joined the paramedics and the ambulance.

âLateral impact,â one of the officers told her. âHeâs dead.â He nodded toward a Hillman. âShe isnât. Yet. Over there.â

It was, thought Phyllis, a miracle that Lu Aguilar was still breathing, given the massive trauma. Compound fractures in both legs, bits of bone showing through the lacerations. Her chest? A collapsed lung? Other thingsâhard to say. The paramedics had done everything necessary, everything they could do.

Luâs breathing was ragged but at least she was still doing it.

And she was conscious and disoriented and full of fright. Phyllis could tell from her eyes. Phyllis got down on her knees.

Carefully, she slipped her arm under Luâs neck, bent down, said in a low voice, âItâs all right, love. Itâs going to be all right, youâll be fine. Listen: Iâm the best doctor in London.â

Amazingly, Lu managed a little smile, one corner of her mouth rising a fraction. And some of the fear seemed to drain away. Phyllis wiped her hand over Luâs forehead, pushing back the hair that wanted to veil her face. Phyllis looked up at the medics and nodded. She held Luâs hand as she was moved to a stretcher.

It had started to rain. She looked around for somebody she knew, saw no one. She pulled out her mobile, hit Richard Juryâs number. It rang and rang. Damn him! Couldnât he keep charged? His flat wasnât far from Upper Street. She went to her car, saw someone had switched off the engine for her, shut the door. It would be harder maneuvering the car through all of this clotted traffic, these people. Now the rain was coming down hard.

Phyllis pulled her coat collar closer and simply ran.

Â

Richard Jury had deposited Melrose Plant at Boringâs, had a nightcap with him, and then driven to his house. It was after midnight and heâd been home less than fifteen minutes, just missed the heavy rain that was now pummeling his windows as if spoiling for a fight.

He heard a clatter on the stairs. Carole-anne probably, running from the rain. Carole-anne for certain when he heard the knock. She had a hard time passing his door without knocking. He opened the door.

âPhyllis!â

He had never seen anyone so wet, so ragged from rain, so breathless from moving through it.

âThereâs been an accident,â she said. âLu Aguilarâno, wait, sheâs

not dead, but sheâs hurt. Tried to call but your mobile was off.â She took a deep breath and propped herself up against the door frame.

âI ran all the way.â